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SERMONS

PREACHED TO A

COUNTRY CONGREGATION:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, A FEW

Hints for Sermons;

INTENDED CHIEFLY FOR THE USE OF THE
YOUNGER CLERGY.

BY WILLIAM GILPIN, *K.*
PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY, AND VICAR OF
BOLDRE, IN NEW FOREST.

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TO

Sir John Mitford,

His Majesty's Solicitor-General.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR old friend
being afraid he shall never again
be able to speak from his pulpit,
like other *considerate* divines, is un-
willing to have his labours lost to
the public, and therefore prints a
volume of his sermons.

It hath been remarked, that re-
spectable laymen, who have turned
their thoughts to religion, have
been of greater service to it, than
ecclesiastics. Such men were Sir

ISAAC

ISAAC NEWTON—Mr. LOCKE—
Mr. ADDISON—and some very eminent lawyers—Sir MATTHEW HALE in particular—and I am proud to mention the late excellent Sir JOSEPH YATES; whose friends knew him to be as pious, and informed a christian, as the public acknowledged him to be an able, and upright judge.

In this view, a Solicitor-General may stand as properly at the head of a volume of sermons, as a Bishop—if he be such a Solicitor-General, as I have every reason to believe him to be, whom I address—with whose character I have had the happiness of being acquainted through a period of more than thirty years.

I wish,

DEDICATION. iii

I wish, my dear Sir, the gift were more worthy of your acceptance. But I am persuaded you have candour enough to rate the value of it by the motive which accompanies it. Whatever you think of the book, you will receive it as a testimony of the very sincere esteem and respect, with which I am, dear Sir,

Your very affectionate,

And obedient humble Servant,

WILL. GILPIN.

VICAR'S HILL, May 10, 1799.

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ИЗДАНИЕ

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P R E F A C E.

VERY few of the following Sermons are more than common parish-discourses; which are perhaps more generally useful, than sermons of a higher class. None of them are on deep subjects; tho most of them on subjects of great importance, which are impressed with what perspicuity and force the author was able to give them.

They are in general, short—certainly too short for pulpit discourses. But there seemed no great necessity for amplification, repetition, or recapitulation in printed discourses, where preceding pages may be examined. They may be useful, when a sermon is delivered from the pulpit; but here they are cut off.

With regard to the mode in which these sermons are composed, it may be necessary to say something, both on the writer's account, and the reader's.

When we write a *treatise*, we consider the subject throughout. We strengthen it with arguments—we clear it of objections—we enter into details—and in short, we leave nothing unsaid, that properly appertains to the subject. Much prefatorial matter also may arise, before we begin the discourse.

But in the construction of a *sermon*, perhaps a different mode of composition may, in general, be more eligible—at least, where a country-congregation only is addressed on a common subject.

In the first place, tho a short opening of a text may often be necessary, there seems to be no occasion for a long preface. Whatever appertains immediately to the discourse, had better perhaps, be introduced into the body of it. If it do not immediately belong to the discourse, it might as well be omitted. At least, if it be not perfectly apposite, it takes off the first edge of attention from an audience, which will not perhaps so readily be restored.

A few

A few easy divisions in discussing a subject, seem useful. Some divines think it better to melt all together. But a few heads, I think, are a kind of land-marks, which prevent the confusion of running one part into another. They are also heads of reference, which bring a subject more easily to the memory.

In proving a point before a common congregation, it seems unnecessary to produce all the arguments, that may be used. Such as are most forcible, are enough. Many will labour a point so much, and throw so many different lights upon it, that like an object seen in a multiplying-glass, it will be confused, rather than enlightened. The common people cannot separate a chain of arguments. They lose one in another.—And in the arguments you use, if you dwell only on the most prominent parts, you may make an impression, which a long detail, tho equally good in its kind, cannot do.—In short, it seems to be one of the preacher's great points to draw his subject into so compact a form, that his congregation may have a compleat view of the *whole*.

An illustration may sometimes not only explain a point; but have the weight of an argument with some

some hearers : at least, it is a vehicle, which makes advice the better remembered.

With regard to language, if you avoid vulgarity, and low ideas, it cannot be too easy. Long sentences are apt to produce confusions. Shorten them as much as you can ; and have an eye chiefly to perspicuity and ease.

Sermons constructed on the plan here described, the author hath thought, from long experience, to be the most useful in a country congregation. Some preachers have the power of fastening the attention of a congregation for more than an hour together. He certainly should not wish to check such preachers : but with numbers, it may be feared, such attempts will be very feeble. In general, perhaps half that time is as long as a country congregation can be brought to attend. At least, as much may be said in that time, as they can well carry off.

These remarks however the author does not by any means address to old established preachers ; but merely to his younger brethren. To them if they are of any use, the author's trouble will be repaid.

It may just be added, that as these discourses were written at different periods of the author's life,

life, when his reading was much among books of this kind, some of the divisions may be borrowed from other writers; tho he does not recollect any that were. Extracts he believes there are none.

To these discourses are added a few little pieces, under the title of *Hints for sermons*.—The origin of them was this. It was long the author's practice when he walked about his parish, and afterwards when he was able only to walk into his garden and fields, to take with him in a memorandum-book, a text or two of scripture, which he had before chosen on account of some observations, which he thought arose from it; or some objection, which he thought might be answered. As he did not mean to carry his observations into length, he took only such texts, as he thought naturally opened themselves; tho the subject sometimes carried him farther than he at first intended. So that some of them are very short; and others were the employment of several walks.

From these hints the author commonly took his sermons: and tho many of the subjects are too critical—too refined—or too deep for a common audience

P R E F A C E.

audience; yet he always found among them a subject for his purpose. The rest, being left in the memorandum-book, increased into a large body.

From this book those few which are printed at the end of the sermons, are taken. They are mere sketches; tho perhaps for that reason, they may have more spirit than finished pieces.

The author enters into this detail with a modest view of being of service to such of his younger brethren, as will pursue the mode of exercise which he here prescribes; and of which he gives these examples. At first, it may be difficult to fix the mind on any subject of meditation, amidst a variety of external objects. But a habit of thinking abroad will soon be formed; and when it is formed, the practice will certainly be followed with great advantage. If the young student spend two hours in a day in walking exercise, he will by this practice, save to his studies at least seven hundred hours in a year.

But he will say perhaps, it is too great a tax upon his mind, in quest of amusement; and may deprive him of its end.

Scholars will sometimes tell him, that even a *severe* study, is a relaxation from another *severe* study, as it gives the mind a different ply. But in the

the employment here recommended no intensity of thought is required. He only puts down what first strikes him on a subject of which he had had before a general conception. When the subject grows intricate—or when his thoughts do not naturally, or, if I may so speak, *amusingly*, flow from it, he is under no necessity to proceed. He may drop it, and take another subject.

Nor is he so tied down to any subject, as not occasionally to look around him, and enjoy the beauties of nature, if any offer themselves in his walk.—And indeed so enlivening a mode of study, if the day be fine, and the country agreeable, will give his mind an elasticity and vigour, which he could not feel in his Study.

The whole then amounts only to this—that to render our walks, not only more useful, but even more amusing, we should always have some pleasing employment at hand. What hath here been recommended, one should hope, would be a more pleasing employment to a serious young clergyman—at least a more clerical one, than a fishing-rod, or a fowling-piece can furnish.

The author mentioned his sermons, and his mode of composing them, with *diffidence*: but he recommends this mode of exercise with *confidence*.

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and a little more, and then I will be able to do more.

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SERMON I.	

SERMON I.

HEBREWS I, I.

GOD, WHO AT SUNDRY TIMES, AND IN DIVERS MANNERS, SPAKE IN TIME PAST UNTO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS; HATH IN THESE LAST DAYS SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON.

IN these words the Apostle gives us a short account of the manner, in which God Almighty was pleased to open the gospel to mankind, from the earliest period of the world.—I shall treat the subject in the Apostle's order; and endeavour to shew you, *first*, what is meant by God's *speaking at sundry times, and in divers manners unto the fathers by the prophets.*—And *secondly*, what is meant by *his speaking, in these last days, to us by his son.*

VOL. I

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With

With regard to the first of these heads, the word, which in our translation is rendered *sundry times*, signifies more properly, *different parts or different portions*. The general meaning therefore of the expression is, that God had vouchsafed to give mankind from the beginning, a revelation of his will, and of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, in such different portions, as to open it by degrees, and always to leave behind some new discovery, which was to enlighten and encourage the hopes of future ages; and thus to prepare mankind for the full reception of the gospel. INT. 74.

Let us then look into the bible; and observe how all this is effected—let us observe the dawning of this sun of righteousness from age to age; and how it brightened through each succeeding period, till at length it broke out in all its splendor.

The intimation to Adam—that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, was undoubtedly very obscure. But yet it contained some foundation for a hope, that the great evil, introduced by the fall of man, should hereafter be repaired. The serpent's head should be bruised: it should be crushed; and deprived of the power of injuring again. So that a triumph was to be at length obtained over the serpent, or whatever

SERMON I.

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evil spirit lay concealed under its form.—But still this promise, whatever it meant, was conceived in such general terms, as to leave its meaning exceedingly uncertain. And yet that it was the vehicle of some hope is very plain, for Eve as was natural, believed, it was fulfilled on the birth of Cain. *I have now said she gotten a man from the Lord.* In this however she soon found herself mistaken; and indeed nothing more could be gathered from this prediction, but that the promised deliverance was to arise from some human being—from the *seed of the woman.*

From this time, nothing passed on this head, that we read of, till the time of Abraham; except indeed the prophetic institution of the rite of sacrifice, which seems to have been appointed to preserve among mankind the idea of an atonement.

If nothing farther however *had* passed, the promise of *bruising the serpent's head* would, no doubt, have died away. But to Abraham the prophecy was renewed, and enlarged. To him it was revealed that the *promised seed of the woman* should arise from his posterity; and farther that this *promised seed* should be a *blessing to all the nations*

B 2

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upon earth. This was both a farther advance of prophecy; and in some degree a confirmation of the first prediction.

The posterity of Abraham increasing, and branching into various tribes, the prophecy was now farther opened to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. To him the particular *tribe* was marked out—that of Judah—from which the Messiah should descend.* And on this hope the world seems to have rested, till the time of David.

Not but in the mean time, various intimations were given of this great event by types in the Jewish history, and institutions: † but I am now speaking chiefly of such intimations, as were *given unto the fathers by the prophets*: among whom we must not pass over Moses, who told the Jews, that the Lord would *raise up a prophet like unto him*—that is, a prophet, who should deliver them—not from an Egyptian bondage; but from a much greater—that of sin and Satan.

When David ascended the throne of Israel, the tribe of Judah was branched into many families. A new prophecy therefore now took place, and the *family* was marked out—the family of David in the tribe

* GENESIS xlix. 10.—† See the next discourse.

SERMON I.

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tribe of Judah, from which the Messiah should be born.

Observe now, I pray you, how gradually this great promise of a Messiah was opened through these different periods of time. To Adam this redemption was merely promised through the *seed of the woman*. To Abraham it was promised, that the Messiah should arise among his *posterity*. To Jacob the *tribe* was pointed out; and to David the *family*. At the same time, intimation was all along given, that the benefit of this Saviour was not confined to a *family*, a *tribe*, or a *nation*; but was extended to all *mankind*. — Thus gradually did the course of prophecy increase from a fountain scarcely visible, into an overflowing stream.

As this great event approached still nearer, the notices of it became stronger. To the prophet Micah the very place of the Messiah's birth was revealed. *Thou Bethlehem, tho thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come who is to be ruler in Israel.*

To Isaiah this great event was still more plainly opened. This evangelical prophet, as he is called, descending to more minute particulars, foretold the Messiah's birth should be miraculous; and his mother a virgin. *Hear ye now, O house of David.*

B 3

The

The Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son; and shall call his name Immanuel.

Afterwards the same prophet, proceeding with more exactness, marks the principal circumstances of the Messiah's life. But still as if to caution the world not to expect in his kingdom the splendor of an earthly prince, he cries out, *When we shall see him, there is no beauty, that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men—a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised, and we esteemed him not.*—Afterwards he goes on still farther, and opens the very cause of his sufferings. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

All the later prophets also following Isaiah, continue to fill up the great outlines, which had been marked by the earlier prophets, with various particulars of the Messiah's life and death. Even the precise time of his death is fixed by the prophet Daniel. *After three-score and two weeks* from the*

going

* In the prophetic language, as many years are signified, as there are days in those weeks.

going out of the decree to rebuild the temple, shall the Messiah be cut off—but not for himself.—Other prophets fix the time of his death to happen, as it did, before the destruction of the second temple.

Thus you see in what a wonderful manner *God spake in times past, in divers manners, unto the fathers by the prophets.* From the first of these prophecies to the last, elapsed a space of time not less than 3,600 years; each prophecy still unfolding something more than the preceding, till at length the prophetic history of the Messiah was complete; and every candid Jew, who diligently read the prophets, was convinced, when Christ appeared, that he was the very person, whom these prophets had foretold. Such was the holy Simeon, who *waited for the consolation of Israel.* When he saw the blessed child brought into the temple, fully convinced, that all the prophecies relating to his birth, were now fulfilled, and that this was the very Christ, the promised Messiah, he took him in his arms, and with holy rapture cried out, *Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.*

Such also was the prophetess Anna, who, in the same manner, spake of him to all, *that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

SERMON I.

The second part of the text remains to be considered—what is meant by *God's speaking in these last days unto us by his son*.

By the *last days*, the *latter days*, the *last times*, and other expressions of the same kind, the Jewish writers always meant to express, as their best interpreters inform us, the kingdom of the Messiah; which was to compleat, and finish all the designs of providence. These words therefore, the *last days*, have no reference to the conclusion of all things—the end of the world—or any thing of that import—but just imply, that God having, through a succession of ages, prepared the world by degrees, for the reception of the gospel, had, in *these last days*, or at length, compleated his whole scheme, by sending Jesus Christ into the world—that this was the last great revelation he intended to make; in which he now fully opened, what had been obscurely traced by the prophets, the introduction of sin by the fall of our first parents—the restoration of a lost world by the death and sacrifice of a Saviour—the conditions of the gospel-covenant; faith in Christ, and a good life—and lastly, the joyful hopes of a blessed resurrection.

Too true it is, that few of mankind, in any age of the world, have made their full advantage of
this

SERMON I.

9.

this gracious dispensation, by living up to that ho-
 lineſs of life, which it enjoins. We muſt not how-
 ever judge of the truth of the goſpel by the little in-
 fluence which it hath on the minds of men. We
 muſt remember, it was predicted by that very goſ-
 pel, that the way to life is *narrow, and few would*
find it. With regard therefore to thoſe deluded
 people, who chuſe rather to give up the comforts of
 religion, than ſubmit to its laws, the goodneſs of
 God is ſurely vindicated by offering them the goſ-
 pel. In the mean time, they who have never
 heard of this gracious diſpenſation; yet have lived
 up to the lights they have had, will undoubtedly,
 through the ſacrifice of Chriſt, meet with favour
 from that gracious maſter, who reaps *only* where he
 hath ſown.

Thus then, from the time of Adam to this pre-
 ſent hour, firſt by the prophets, and afterwards by
 the ſon of God himſelf, hath this gracious ſcheme
 of providence been opening more and more; and
 we have reaſon to believe from prophecy, will ſtill
 continue to ſpread wider and wider, till it hath
 made its progreſs over the face of the earth.

David in the Pſalm of this day,* illustrating pro-
 bably through the ſpirit of prophecy, this univerſal
 range

* CHRISTMAS DAY, Pſalm 19.

range of the Messiah's kingdom, compares it to the sun, which *goeth forth from the uttermost part of heaven ; and runneth about unto the end of it again ; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*—And indeed nothing can be a more beautiful, or more just illustration of this grand event through all its darker and lighter periods. Day-light is first dimly discovered through the twilight of morning. The eastern clouds are streaked with a faint light. We see through all this splendid obscurity, that something grand is approaching. The several shades of darkness by degrees give way. Day comes on more and more—till at length the sun rises in all its glory ; and opening into the fullest splendor, surrounds the earth from one end of it to the other.

Having thus explained the text, I shall conclude with a few short observations, which it suggests.

In the first place, this gradual progress of prophecy furnishes one of the strongest proofs of the Christian religion ; to the truth of which the *spirit of prophecy* thus makes every age of the world bear testimony. About four hundred years indeed before the coming of Christ, all prophecy ceased.

It

It was necessary indeed it should cease some considerable time before the event took place; least a suspicion might arise that prophecy was only history. Till that time however its current was uninterrupted. When therefore we see through a succession of ages, a course of prophecies exactly describing an event as it afterwards fell out—and when we are well assured, as we may be by infallible proof, that all these prophecies were published many hundred years before the birth of Christ; what can we suppose, but that they were directed by the spirit of God; and of course, that the religion, which was ushered into the world in so grand, so divine, and so convincing a manner, must be true.

We are next led to conclude, from what hath been above considered, that the Christian religion is superior to every other religion, that hath appeared in the world. None can, in any degree dispute a preference with it, but the Jewish. And that it is superior to the Jewish religion, is sufficiently plain from its being a succeeding revelation. When God Almighty makes discoveries of his will, we cannot conceive, he first discovers the most perfect; and afterwards what is less so. What purpose would that answer? what gift, what advantage

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tage would that be to mankind? But it is very natural to suppose, that mankind might not be at first prepared for the most perfect religion; and that God, by degrees, prepared them for it by giving them what was less perfect. Such is the inferiority of the law to the gospel.

I shall observe lastly, that if the Christian religion be not only true; but superior to every other religion, we ought with all our hearts to receive it. I do not mean that we should receive it, as we do other great truths; that we should merely believe, and give our assent to it. It was not for this Christ came into the world—it was not for this he was born in a manger, and died on a cross—but that it should enter into our hearts—that it should be the great directing principle of our thoughts; our words, and our actions—that we should carry it about with us—that it should be of daily use to us in our intercourse with God—our neighbour, and ourselves. Without the practice of its rules, the mere knowledge of it—the mere assent to its truth, is mathematics—not religion. Christ came to save us from our sins: but we must first, by our holy lives, make ourselves objects of his mercy. If we do that, Christ *will* save us. But without our own endeavours the gospel-covenant

SERMON I.

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nant is of no effect. In a word, the gospel, we may be assured, was graciously intended for our greatest good; but we may change it, if we please, into the sentence of our condemnation.

SERMON

S E R M O N I I.

JOHN, 3, xiv.

AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP; THAT WHOEVER BELIEVETH ON HIM, SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

WE are here referred to a very extraordinary transaction, which is related in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers; and in the words I have just read to you in the text, is applied by our blessed Saviour as a type of his *death* and *atonement*, which are only similar expressions; for the *death* of Christ made the *atonement*, and could have no other end. For your instruction therefore, this morning, I shall examine this passage of scripture; and shall endeavour to explain to you, *first*, what is meant by a type;

type; and *secondly*, how the lifting up of the brazen serpent is a type of the death and atonement of Christ.

I am first, to explain to you, what is meant by a type.—In order to prove the truth of the Christian religion, and to prepare men for it, it pleased God, many ages before Jesus Christ appeared, to inspire holy men with the spirit of prophecy, (as I endeavored to shew you in my last discourse,) to give notice of his coming. The bible is full of these prophecies.—But still to render the proof from prophecy yet stronger, it pleased God to give mankind not only written prophecies, but the prophecy likewise of types. A written prophecy differs from a prophecy by a type in this; the one is a prophecy by *words*—the other by *actions*. Thus, for instance, the prophet Isaiah speaking of Christ's death, says *his soul* (that is, his *life*) *shall be made an offering for sin*. This is a prophecy of our Saviour's death in *words*. In another part of scripture we read, that Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his only son Isaac. This was a prophecy of Christ's death by an *action*—that is, by a *type*.—Again, David prophesying of Christ's resurrection, says, *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*, (that is, in the grave) *neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see*

cor-

corruption. This is a prophecy in *words*. In another part of scripture we read, that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, and remained three days, and three nights in its belly; and afterwards came to light. This is a prophecy of our Saviour's resurrection by an *action*—that is by a *type*.

Here you will say the action, or type, is of a very wonderful nature.

Indeed it is: but you must consider, that as the resurrection of our Saviour on the third day, was a wonderful event, the prophetic type of this event must be wonderful also, or it could not represent what it was intended to represent. In short the power of God in this case wrought a miracle, to give us the prophetic type of a miraculous event.

But here a difficulty may arise. A written prophecy in its nature, is more plain. *A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son*, is a prophecy as appropriate to Christ's birth as words can make it. But a type is more liable to mistake. One action may be like another in many circumstances; and yet there may be no relation between them. I shall endeavour therefore to shew you on *what grounds an action* may be called
a *pro-*

a *prophetic type*. With regard for instance to Jonah; his being-buried three nights, and three days in the whale, and then coming to light, bears a strong resemblance, it is certain, to our Saviour's rising again on the third day: but this resemblance alone is not a sufficient ground to adopt the story of Jonah as a type. Something else is required.

We expect, in the first place, that an action, in order to be considered as a type, should be expressly marked, and applied as such by some inspired person. Thus Jonah is expressly applied as a type by our Saviour himself. When the Pharisees asked him for a sign, he tells them he would give them no sign, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. *For as Jonah was three days, and three nights in the whale's belly: so shall the son of man be three days, and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

But, secondly, tho an action may not be expressly applied as a type by any inspired person; yet still it may be considered as one, if it stand connected with a number of other actions of a like kind, which are themselves applied as types. Thus we consider the sacrifices, and atoning rites of the Jewish law, as types, or typical prophecies, of our Savi-

Saviour's atonement for sin; most of them being mentioned as such in the new Testament, particularly in the epistle to the Hebrews. Yet there are some, which are not mentioned. Thus for instance, the high-priest's confessing the sins of the people over the scape-goat, which was turned loose into the wilderness, is no where as I recollect, mentioned as a type: yet it may notwithstanding be fairly considered as such, not merely because of its resemblance; but because it stands connected with a number of other actions, which are expressly mentioned as types.

Having thus endeavoured to explain to you, in few words, the meaning of that kind of prophecy which is called a type, I shall now, as I proposed secondly dwell a little on the type of Moses's lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness; and shew you how exactly it was a type of the death and atonement of Christ.

The account given us of Moses's lifting up the serpent, is this. The children of Israel in passing through the wilderness, were guilty of frequent rebellions against God. To punish one of these rebellions, God afflicted them with poisonous serpents, which destroyed many of them. In their distress,

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distress, they ran to Moses, and intreated him to intercede with God in their behalf. Moses undertook their cause ; and was ordered by God to set up a serpent of brass on a pole, and intrust the people, when they were bitten with serpents, to look at it, and it should immediately heal them. This was accordingly done. The brazen serpent was set up ; and as many as were bitten, on looking at it, were relieved. This, you see, is a miraculous action, like that of Jonah : the brazen serpent could have no natural power to relieve a malady, but as it was intended to typify the atonement of Christ, God gave it that power by a miracle : for, as I just told you, if a wonderful event is represented by a type, we may expect to find that type also to be of a wonderful nature. The truth of the *fact*, however wonderful, one should think, infidelity itself can hardly doubt. The serpent was set up by Moses before thousands of people ; and *recorded* by Moses himself among that very people, through whose descendants we have the *record*.*

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* The bible rests on its own authority, and is itself not at all solicitous about evidence. It happens therefore that a *fact* is sometimes founded on clear evidence, and sometimes rests on authority. But when a wonderful *fact*, like this of the brazen serpent, is individually supported by the clearest evidence, it strengthens the credit of other wonderful facts, which rest only on the general evidence of the truth of scripture.

Let us now see in what circumstances the lifting up of the brazen serpent bears a relation to the death and atonement of Christ.

In the first place, the passage of the Israelites through the wilderness, very aptly represents the natural state of man, after the fall of Adam. The misery and mischief introduced by sin are also as naturally represented by *stinging serpents*; to which sin is often compared in scripture. In the distress of the Israelites, the brazen serpent was reared; and whoever looked at it was healed. Nothing can be a more exact resemblance of the death of Christ. He was lifted on a cross, to be a remedy for sin. As the Israelites looked at the serpent, and were healed; so we look at Christ with the eye of faith, and are saved. The brazen serpent had the appearance of a mischievous animal; but was itself innocent. Thus Christ crucified as a malefactor, had the appearance of a sinful man; yet was in fact without sin. In truth the very representation was given in the wilderness, of what was completely fulfilled 1,400 years afterwards, on mount Golgotha.

But now, tho all these circumstances so exactly resemble the death and atonement of Christ, yet still, as the setting up of the brazen serpent is an

action

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action that stands single in its place, and is not connected with others of the same kind, we should have had no authority to call it a prophetic type, unless some inspired person had fixed it as such; which our Saviour himself has done in the text.

Few of the Jews probably, at the time of the brazen serpent, looked at it in any other light, or considered the matter any farther, than as a present relief in their distress. And yet such of them, as thought more deeply, could not but think it had some secret meaning. In aftertimes, when the prophets described a suffering Saviour, and bade the Jews *look on him whom they pierced*, the more serious of them could not but see some resemblance in these prophecies to this uncommon representation. To look at a brazen serpent was so singular a remedy against the poison of a serpent's bite; that one should think they could not but conceive it had some covert meaning. The author of the book of wisdom seems plainly to have reasoned in this manner: *For when, says he, they perished by the stings of serpents, they were healed for a small season, that they might be admonished; having a sign of salvation to put them in remembrance of thy law. For he that turned himself towards it, was not saved by the things*

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*which he saw ; but by the Saviour of all For it was neither herb, nor mollifying plaister, that restored him but thy word.**

From what hath been above considered, we see the great force which types in general give to the truth of Christianity. Some people may be more struck with a type than with a written prophecy. But every thing, which shews a connection between the old Testament, and the new, adds strength to both. The type also and verbal prophecy strengthen each other. But particularly we see the great force which the type of the brazen serpent gives to the grand doctrine of the atonement of Christ ; which is, in the opinion of all sober Christians, the most comfortable doctrine that ever was revealed to man.

But it is mysterious, says the deist.

Aye, surely ; and so is every pile of grafs you tread on. But the question is not, whether a thing be mysterious---for all things are mysterious---but whether the mystery be supported by
evi-

* See the WISDOM OF SOLOMON, chap. 16, in the several verses of which these sentiments are scattered.---The opinion, that this book was written by Solomon, is generally exploded ; tho it is commonly believed to have been composed before the time of our Saviour.

evidence? The pile of grafs appeals to all nature, for its being the work of God: and the truth of Chrift's atonement, however myfterious, is fupported by evidence equally ftrong.---It refts on all the evidence that fcripture can give---on the prophetic parts of the old Testament, and on the hiftorical, and epiftolary parts of the new. Indeed it appears to be a doctrine fo interwoven with fcripture, that he who rejects it, muft reject fcripture alfo. That experiment the dift himfelf commonly thinks too hardy. But he rejects it in effect by garbling it.

This great doctrine is fupported alfo by the analogy of God's moral government, under which we all act as a kind of redeemers, and mediators among each other, in our own little temporal affairs.

Nor is it a weak argument in favour of this doctrine, when we appeal to our own feelings. We muft be confcious, when we look into ourfelves, of fuch unworthinefs, as muft entirely difqualify us for the divine favour, without fome better introduction than our own. It is an opinion ftrongly implanted in our nature. Guilt always wifhes for fupport.

Let

Let us then, to conclude from the whole, accept without scruple the great doctrine of the atoning death of Christ, till we can fairly disprove the evidence on which it rests. In the midst of all this evidence, it is a great-pleasure to the sincere christian, and has no little weight with him, to observe so perfect a resemblance of it prophetically held out many hundred years, before the great event itself took place. As the Israelites therefore looked on the brazen serpent, which Moses set up, so let us look, with the eye of faith, on our blessed Saviour, expiring on the cross for our sins.---With what gratitude would you have poured out your hearts in the wilderness on feeling yourselves miraculously healed from the effects of a poison, which was seizing you with the most horrible pains, and in a short time ready to close your eyes in death? The type being only a resemblance of the thing typified, can never rise to an equality with it. The poison of a serpent therefore bears no comparison to the malignity of sin. Indeed sin is the grand evil of nature---the great cause of every mischief here, and misery hereafter.

As sin therefore is an evil with which we are all tainted, let us with endless gratitude look beyond the

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the type to the great atonement it holds out; and not presuming on any merits of our own as sufficient to procure our salvation, let us trust only in the merits of that merciful Redeemer, who *died to save sinners; and gave his life a ransom for all.*

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SERMON III.

GALATIANS 5, i.

STAND FAST IN THE LIBERTY, WHEREIN CHRIST
HATH MADE US FREE,

THE enemies of religion do not easily allow the truth of such a passage as this. What can be meant, they say, by the *liberty*, wherein *Christ hath made us free*? Religion is certainly in its nature a restraint upon liberty; and as christianity is the strictest religion, it must of course be the greatest restraint. To call it a holy, and pure religion might be allowed; but to hear it called a state of liberty, one should least have expected. For does it not preach every kind of restraint? Does it not talk of plucking out eyes, and cutting off hands? which expressions, tho figurative,

gurative, mean at least some great constraint. And is this consistent with liberty?

Such is the language, at least the sentiments, of some, who either do not understand the christian religion; or do not feel its effects. In the following discourse, I shall endeavour to shew you they are mistaken. I shall *first* explain to you, on what grounds, the christian religion may be called a state of liberty: and *secondly* recommend to your practice the Apostle's advice, to *stand fast in that liberty*.

In the first place, the christian religion may be called a state of liberty, as it frees mankind from the useless burden of rites, and ceremonies. This was the first notion of liberty, it gave its professors. The religion of the heathen consisted merely in this kind of service. They believed, all religion was made up of outward acts, and ceremonies. But as these outward acts, and ceremonies did not amend the heart, they were in fact no religion at all. And as there was something of pomp, and shew, and amusement in them, they grew up in people. Trifling and insignificant they always were. Sometimes they were carried to a frightful height; filling the minds of men with superstitious fears; and putting them on barbarous and cruel rites.

rites. We have instances in the priests of Baal, who *gashed themselves with knives, and lancets, till the blood gushed out*; supposing that these barbarities were a kind of religion, that was pleasing to their Gods.—But we have still more shocking instances in the priests of Moloch, who made their sons and daughters *pass through the fire*—that is, they burnt them alive in honour of their horrid idol.

The religion of the Jews likewise, in a great measure was made up of external acts. God, for his own wise reasons, imposed many ceremonies upon them. It was a hard bondage; but as they were a stiff-necked people, a necessary one. Through their own folly, and superstition however they imposed a still heavier burden of rites and ceremonies on themselves. Infomuch, that when our Saviour came into the world, the whole had arisen to such a load, as *neither they, nor their fathers were able to bear*.

Thanks be to God, the gospel hath redeemed mankind from all this bondage—from all those rites and ceremonies, which *could never make the comers thereunto perfect*. The Heathen, trembling under all the terrors of superstition; and the Jew, appealing the anger of an incensed Jehovah, by a thousand

thousand painful rites, were called on by a gracious voice to take refuge in that religion, which alone could give them liberty and peace—that religion, whose *yoke was easy, and whose burden was light.*

Christianity hath put religion on a rational footing. It calls upon us for the religion of the heart; and instead of putting our trust in outward observances, requires from us holy faith, rational prayer, and pious lives. Two ceremonies only Christ ordained; Baptism and the Lord's Supper—both so plain, and easy, that they cannot be called *burdens.* The first is to be performed once as an outward sign of our entrance into the christian religion; the other frequently, as an outward sign of our continuance in it.—As for the rest, such ceremonies as are necessary for the decent government of the church, are left to its direction; and the fewest, and most plain, have always been esteemed the best; that the people may as little as possible be drawn from things of importance.

The papists indeed have unnecessarily thrown upon their own necks another yoke, full as grievous, as that from which as christians they had been relieved. Their whole religion is so blended with penances, processions, pilgrimages, and follies
of

of various kinds, that they seem to have lost all idea of the liberty of the gospel; and to have formed their church on the slavish principles of Jews, and Heathen.

Christianity may further be called a state of liberty, as it frees us from the bondage of sin. Before christianity, men generally acted, as their appetites and passions led: and this might be called a state of liberty, if men pleased; but it could not be called so consistently with good sense. For whether is it more proper, think you, for a man's passions and appetites to govern his reason; or for his reason to govern his passions, and appetites? Which government, think you, has more the appearance of liberty; and which of slavery? The reason of a man *is* the man. His passions and appetites are *only* the brutal part. When you see a man riding a headstrong horse; which, tho he sits, he cannot manage; when you see him hurried on without any aim or direction; and carried headlong into a thousand dangers, which he might have escaped, if he could have managed his beast; nobody will say, that such a man is in a state of liberty; but that he is under the management of a beast, which carries him, where it will. The beast indeed

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Indeed is at liberty : but the man is evidently under the power of another. But when you see a man sit his horse with power to command it ; when you see him turn it ; guide it ; impel it ; check it ; in short, manage it just as he pleases, *then* you say, the beast is governed, and the man is at liberty.—Now this is just the case with regard to our passions and appetites. When they run away with us —when they carry us violently into all mischief, we are not surely in a state of liberty. It is the beast that carries us off: so that, in fact, no man can be said to be in a state of liberty, unless he govern his passions and appetites ; and not they, him. This was David's idea : *I will walk at liberty*, says he, and the reason he gives, is, because *I keep thy commandments.*

Now it was the great design of christianity, to call men to this state of liberty ; and to place them under the government of their reason : so that the precepts of religion, in few words, are merely a set of rules, which inform our reason, and make it capable of governing us. *Ye shall know the truth*, saith our blessed Saviour, *and the truth shall make you free :—but who so ever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.*

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In the first ages of christianity it is astonishing to read of the sudden change in the morals of men, which it wrought. For a while, it seemed to have put an end to the dominion of sin. From being fierce, malicious, cruel, and revengeful, men became mild; friendly, humane, and forgiving—they became in our Saviour's language, *lambs among wolves*. I speak, observe, of the first christians. The christian world now makes a very different appearance. Now we hear cursing, and swearing on every side—we see the bible thrown aside—and sunday turned into a day of diversion. We see men defraud and slander one another; we see them malicious and revengeful; we see them themselves selfish, and uncharitable. But no one will presume to censure christianity for this. You will be pleased to remember one thing, which is, that people, who do these things, are not christians. You will also remember another thing; there is a great difference between a man's being a true christian, and his happening to live in a christian country. To know the value of the christian religion, we are not to consider what men *are*; but what they *might be*.

Let us now lastly see, how christianity may be called

called a state of liberty from its enlarging the mind, and opening the doctrine of universal charity.

The heathen nations had little notion of this doctrine. It never entered into their heads, that their charitable regard ought to extend beyond their own country: and if their *patriotism*, as they called it, was founded on a hatred to other nations, it was the more commendable.

Nor were the Jews, tho blessed with a more perfect knowledge, inclined to a much better practice. Their charity was generally confined to their circumcised brethren. The *uncircumcised* was a name of reproach, which excluded other nations from the expectation of their charitable offices. Indeed their religion, which for wise reasons was contrived to separate them from other nations, tho it often breathed a spirit of great benevolence to strangers, had however some effect in producing this confined temper,

Greatly otherwise are the precepts of christianity. The gospel sets us free from all these confined notions. It enlarges the human heart. It teaches us to call all mankind our neighbours—even our brethren. It points them all out to us as

the children of one common parent; equally re- deemed by the blood of Christ;—equal inheritors of one common blessing; and as such included in one common bond of charity.

But here again, my brethren, you must remember, that you are not to take your charitable notions from such christians as you daily see, many of whom, I fear, practise them very little: but you are to take your notions of this matter from your bibles. He who goes elsewhere for instruction, as I told you before, is no christian.

Since then christianity may thus properly be called (as I hope I have made plain to you) a state of liberty, let it be our earnest care, as the apostle adviseth us, to *stand fast in that liberty*.

And first, as the gospel hath freed us from the bondage of rites, and ceremonies, let us endeavour after the true spirit of religion.—Men have two ways, you must know, of shewing their religion. The first is, by practising conscientiously the duties of it—by being pious, just and temperate; and making religion a part, as it were, of their lives, and manners.—But as many people think this way of being religious, rather troublesome, and inconvenient; and as they wish notwithstanding to

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go to heaven, they are willing to try an easier way. So instead of a religious life, they wish to try, what certain actions will do for them, which have a good religious appearance, and being done, now and then, without any great interruption of the ordinary pleasures of life, are much easier, than spending their whole time in the habits of religion. Thus many people, who lead careless lives, are very liberal in giving alms—are constant at church—and often at the sacrament. All this is good; but if it be meant to be exchanged for a religious life, the exchange, I fear, will never be accepted. People who take refuge in such practices, imitate the Pharisees of old, who were willing to believe, that washing their hands half-a-dozen times a day, and tithing mint and cummin, would atone for a bad life.—A religion is not preached to us, which consists of *meats and drinks*, as the apostle speaks, that is, of outward expressions of religion; but of *righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*. Let it always therefore be present in our minds; that the *form* of religion without the *spirit* of it, is nothing—that going to church, unless for example's sake, is no better than going to market, if it do not make *our hearts better*—that giving alms has no value in the sight of God, if it

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be meant to cover sin—and that unless we imitate our Saviour's life, his name is no passport to heaven. He tells us plainly, that many will make claims in that day ; and will cry, Lord, Lord, have we not done so and so in thy name? These are people, who have an outside religion, instead of the religion of the heart. You remember the answer, *I know you not ; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*—In one word, nothing, but what amends our hearts, and lives, can be called religion ; or in any degree qualify us for receiving the mercies of God, through the atonement of Christ.

Again, hath Christ redeemed us from the yoke of sin ; and given us generous, and enlarged sentiments of kindness ; let it be our care, that his sufferings shall have their effect. Let it ever be in our thoughts that sin is the severest task-master we can serve—and that its wages in the end are certainly death.——Nor let us be content with a mere freedom from sin : but let us endeavour to cultivate that general love, which is commanded in the gospel. This is the chief badge, by which we are *known to be Christ's disciples.* Let us free our minds from all prejudices and dislikes to others on any pretence whatever, Do they differ from us in religion

religious opinions? Are they dissenters of any denomination from our own church? It is nothing to us. There are good men of all persuasions: and good men of all persuasions, we have no doubt, will find their way to heaven. Let us then consider them as brother-christians: and treat them with that kindness, with which God, we doubt not, will treat them.—Are they men of a dubious, or even of a bad character? Mix with them indeed we cannot, unless we have hope of reforming them: but while we detest the sin, let our hearts be touched with a tenderness for the sinner; and a readiness to be of any real service to him in our power.—Or are they, (to come still nearer home) men who have done us an injury? Let us remember what our Lord says; *Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will my heavenly father forgive your trespasses.*

Having thus exerted that liberty, *wherewith Christ hath made us free*—having acted the true christian part—and as faithfully as we can, served that God, *whose service is perfect freedom*, we shall finally be removed into a more exalted state of liberty, than any this world can afford—even *the glorious liberty of the sons of God.*

SERMON IV.

MATTHEW 25, xiv.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AS A MAN TRAVELLING
 INTO A FAR COUNTRY; WHO CALLED HIS SER-
 VANTS, AND DELIVERED UNTO THEM HIS GOODS.

THIS verse is the introduction to one of our Saviour's parables, which was intended to explain the usual method of God's dealings with mankind; and the proper return he expects.—The substance of it is this.

A master of a family being about to take a journey, leaves in the hands of his servants, several sums of money—or *talents* as they are called—to each servant a different sum, which he in-
 structs

struts them to improve against his return. At that time he calls them all to an account—examines the care and industry of each ; and rewards, or punishes them, as they had improved or neglected their several trusts.—The observations which arise from this parable, shall be the subject of the following discourse.

First, we may observe that God, hath bestowed, for his own wise reasons, different talents on different men. To one man he hath given ten ; to another only one.—Now this subordination, in fact, pervades all the works of God. We see it take place through every part of nature—that is, we see one creature gradually rising above another in perfection. Thus plants excel inanimate things—animals excel plants—men excel mere animals—and angels men.—Again, we see the same degrees of superiority, among creatures of the same kind. Thus among plants, some excel others in beauty, and use. Amongst irrational animals, some are more perfect than others. And in the human race likewise we find the same order observed. Thus to some men, God hath given strength, and vigour, and bodily powers in a great degree : while others labour under deformities, weaknesses, and habits

of a sickly constitution. To some again, God hath given great abilities of mind; while the reason of others scarce exceeds the instinct of brutes. To some likewise he hath given riches and power, whilst to others he hath allotted poverty and obscurity.—Thus far however we only observe from the parable, the order in which God hath varied his several talents.

But secondly we observe from it; that in consequence of these different talents, which God hath assigned to the rational part of his creatures, he hath assigned likewise different duties—some particular office in life to each man, which arises from his peculiar talent; and appears indeed to be the sole cause for which the talent was intrusted. So that in whatever situation a man is placed, it is his business to enquire what particular duties arise from that particular situation: for that particular situation is the talent which God hath intrusted to him; and those particular duties, are the offices, in consequence assigned. Thus, for instance, when a man is placed in a high station, intrusted with power, and authority, he should consider the *peculiar* offices arising from such a station, are to protect the weak; to redress the injured; and as far as he can, to discountenance, and punish wickedness.--

edness.---Again, when a man is possessed of wealth, he should consider, that the *peculiar* office arising from this intrusted talent, is to diffuse charity, bounty, and happiness among the indigent, and deserving.---Here then, you see, we have advanced a step farther. We not only observe, that God hath varied his gifts, among mankind: but we see the reason of it. The general good of mankind requires it. The glory of God requires it. The various necessities of man in every shape are thus provided for. A variety of means, and opportunities of well-doing are opened; and the goodness of God, through his creatures as his instruments, is every where spread around.

But this is not all. We advance still farther; and observe from the parable, not only that particular duties arise thus from particular talents; but we see the proportion likewise that should subsist between them. If we have ten talents intrusted to us, an improvement of ten talents will be expected from us: if five, an improvement of five: and if but one, an improvement of that one. For *as every man hath received the gift, even so must he minister the same, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God.* Thus God expects from

from those, to whom he hath given riches, for instance, not only that they should be charitable and bountiful to others; but that their charity and bounty should bear a proportion to their wealth. From the man of one talent little can be expected: but the man of ten has a large trust committed to him. From those again who are placed in eminent stations in life, God expects not only services done to mankind; but services proportioned to their power, and authority.--- Thus God lays a tribute as it were, on all his creatures, which he proportions exactly to their several abilities. The adjustment indeed of this proportion, as is necessary in a state of trial, must be left to every man's conscience. He should however take care, as he certainly may, that his conscience is directed by scripture-rules.

But it is not only to the rich, and powerful--- to those who have their ten talents, and their five talents, that the parable is applied; we may further observe from it (and bring it home to all ranks of men) that every man has some talent intrusted to him. One talent we find was committed to the lowest servant. Thus the lowest orders of men have generally the means of being made acquainted with their duty---they have a church

church to go to, and a bible to read. It is likewise greatly in their power, to contribute to the happiness of their families at home. They have health, and strength perhaps to attend their respective callings. They have sometimes also opportunities of doing little friendly offices for their neighbours. And if all these means are not allowed to every man, at least some of them are; and will be considered as talents intrusted to the poorest as far as they go, in the same manner, as wealth, and authority are to the highest.

From hence therefore it follows, that from the poorest likewise some duties in life are expected. For we may observe, that he, who had only one talent given, was ordered to improve that one, as well as he who had ten: and when he folded it up in a napkin, and neglected to use it, because it was but one, we find he was severely punished. Thus to make themselves acquainted with their religion---to lead good lives---to do all the neighbourly offices in their power---and with industry, and care to support their families as decently, as they can, and instruct them as well, are duties, which from the very poorest are expected; because they are no more than duties proportioned

to

to those talents with which the very poorest are intrusted.

Lastly, we observe from the parable (and an observation it is of the utmost consequence) that hereafter all our accounts will be examined in the strictest manner---that all circumstances will be then considered---the temptations we have had to struggle with, opposed to the power given to withstand those temptations--- what we have done will be balanced against what we might have done--- in a word, the talent intrusted will be compared with the duties performed---and that finally, according to our merits, or demerits, we shall be in just proportion, rewarded or punished. He, who improved one pound into ten, was made ruler over ten cities; and he who improved it into five, was made ruler over five: while he, who buried his talent in the ground, was confined to weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Besides the truths which the parable hath already taught, it will teach us some others, tho not so directly.

It will teach us to be content with our talent, whatever that talent is. Be it what it will, it is the

* ST LUKE, 19, xvi.

the station assigned to us by God himself. It may perhaps be an inferior station : but still, as God hath placed us in it, it must be that station, which is most proper for us. If God please, he will take his own method of raising us to a higher station. In the mean time, let us not be anxious about the matter ; and above all things let us take no wry steps to alter our condition. Degrees of high and low, which we have seen take place through all God's works, are absolutely necessary for the good of all. It is absolutely necessary to the well-being of mankind, that different stations should be assigned to different men—that some should be placed high in life, and others low—that there should be hands, and feet to labour, as well as a head to preside. So that whoever murmurs at his lot in life, murmurs at the wisest providence in the government of the world. Besides, where would such a person stop ? If God should raise him to the point he aimed at, while there is a point yet higher, his dissatisfied mind would tempt him to murmur still. Let him then be content : and since of himself he hath a title to nothing, instead of murmuring for what he thinks he wants, let him thank God for what he really has.—He hath this consolation in his low estate ;
and

and a very great consolation it is, if rightly considered, and not presumed on--that as less is intrusted to him, for less he will be accountable. He sees how few---how very few indeed---apply their talents as they ought.---It might have been his case.---Let him then be happy in the reflection, that he hath escaped those snares, into which superior talents might have drawn him.

We may farther learn, from what hath been above considered, the obligations we lie under of acting agreeably to our several stations from a *principle of conscience*. We have seen, that God hath annexed particular duties to particular talents. He hath given us the latter that we may observe the former. Our respective stations in life therefore should in fact be considered as trusts reposed with certain conditions; which conditions, if we enjoy the advantages, we are bound in conscience to observe.---If indeed we do not look up to God Almighty as the giver of all good things; but think we are indebted for them merely to our good fortune, our prudence, our wisdom, or our industry, why then indeed we cut the matter short.---We then must leave it to be settled at the great day of accounts, between God, and

and our souls. But if we believe truly in the providence of God, as all good christians do, we must believe, that every thing is disposed, as he hath ordered; and must consider our consciences engaged to perform the office, which depends on the station.

Hence we see the notion of *property* rightly stated. By their actions men seem to think, that their wealth, is given them--if they acknowledge it at all to be given---merely for their own use: and the prejudices of life contribute strongly to impress that notion. Whereas in fact, we find, it is a talent intrusted for a very different purpose,--To preserve peace and quietness in society indeed, it is necessary, that human laws should consider every man's possession merely as his own property: but God's laws, we find, consider things in a different light.

Lastly, people of low condition have the great comfort of being assured, that altho different stations are necessary in this world, all these distinctions will be removed in the next. Talents will not then be regarded; but the use, that has been made of them. God regards not station. He who hath behaved properly in a high station, will

will not be more rewarded than he who hath behaved as properly in a low one. Let the poor man therefore walk humbly with his God--let him bear his poverty with religious resignation, and do his duty in his low estate; and his wealthy neighbour, who gives away thousands in charity, and on the best motives; shall not hereafter be more rewarded, than he.

Consider then with attention, and reverence, the great end, and design of your stations here---the wisdom, and goodness, with which God hath appointed them. He hath sent you into the world. ---For what purpose think you? Not as a place of abode---but to fit you for a blessed eternity; and your several stations in life, whether high or low, are the means he employs---those different talents, as they are called, which the parable instructs you to improve.

Let us consider the world therefore as God's great family; and ourselves as servants in that family---as acting immediately, whatever our stations are, under our great master; and of discharging the several offices, which he hath assigned, with a conscientious regard to our duty. Let us not amuse ourselves with trifling suppositions, how

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we should behave, if God should place us in such, or such circumstances of life—how well we should bestow our wealth, if we were rich ; or how vigorously we should act, if God should give us power and authority. All this is absurd. Let us consider only the station in which we are placed. This is our proper business ; the whole of our concern here : and we may be assured, that he who misapplies the talent he has, would find some excuse, for misapplying a superior talent, if it had been intrusted to him.

S E R M O N V.

MATTHEW 22, XIV,

MANY ARE CALLED ; BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN.

THIS passage, among others, has been strangely perverted by those christians, who interpret it, as if God Almighty had decreed some men to be eternally happy, and others eternally miserable. Our own good lives have nothing to say in this matter. Our Saviour's merits have nothing to say in it. It is God's decree. We read, that *many are called ; but few chosen*---that is, say they, out of the number of us sinners, God chuses such a particular set, by his absolute decree ; and all the rest must perish.

I think

SERMON V.

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I think it needless to confute this mischievous interpretation of the text. Indeed it sufficiently confutes itself. *Many*, we are told, *are called*. What is meant by being *called*? It is ridiculous to suppose God *calls* any one, who cannot *answer* the call.—The real interpretation of the text therefore seems to be this. The christian religion is the call of repentance to many : but alas ! out of these many, very few qualify themselves by their holy lives, to accept its mercies. So that, tho many are *called* few are *chosen* : but not through God's decree, but through their own fault.

The text, thus explained, naturally leads us to take a view of the many who are *called* ; that is, of the different kinds of christians—if we are to give all people that name, who live in a christian country. I shall consider them under three heads—as openly *wicked* men—as specious, or *decent* men, and as truly *religious* men : and I shall leave you all to judge, as I go on, among which of them you are to rank yourselves.

In the first placé, by openly *wicked* men, we mean all those, who are under no kind of restraint

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either of religion, or of decency. Tell such people of a world after this—of their being accountable for their actions; and of the gospel denunciations of damnation upon all who lead such ungodly lives, without repentance; they are hardened to every thing of this kind—it has no effect upon them. They trouble themselves no more about the next world; and what is to become of their souls after death; than if they had no souls. —All fear of the next world therefore being removed, we need not wonder to see them prepared for any kind of wickedness. They are generally abandoned to low pleasures, and become knaves, because their pleasures make a larger demand upon them, than they can satisfy in an honest way.

Many of you, I doubt not, have met with these men of pleasure, who without any visible employment, *live upon their wits*, as it is called—that is, upon their own knavery, and the simplicity of others.—They are found both in high life and low.—I need not lengthen my description, of this race of men; as none such, I am persuaded, are among my present hearers. They are not a church going people. Lessons of religion have no effect upon them. Their restraint only is what the

the law lays upon them. The jail and the gallows are the only objects of their fear.

One thing however let me add ; all these profligate people are certainly among those *who are called*. They are *called*, every day, by all those opportunities of knowing their duty, which, in a christian country, they can never want. If they live within the hearing of a church-bell, they have a call to their duty.—They are called too by their own sense of right and wrong—by the admonitions of reason ; the advice often of friends ; and the remonstrances of conscience.—They are called also to a better sense of things by the little satisfaction they feel in their ungodly gains, and ungodly pleasures ; and by the distresses of various kinds, which they often bring upon themselves : and lastly, before things come to this extremity, they are continually called by the bad example of others ; who, by following the same wicked courses, draw upon themselves, often fatal, always mischievous consequences.—And sometimes it happens, that by one or other of these gracious calls, their hardened hearts are softened : they lament their past lives ; they acknowledge the grace of God : they repent from their hearts : accept with faith, and humility, the redemption of Christ ;

Christ; and become new men. But till this happy change is produced, we must consider them as men, who are *called* indeed; but cannot be *chosen*.

From the *notoriously wicked man*, let us consider the character I proposed next to describe, that of the specious or *decent* man. By the decent man, I mean him, who governs all his actions by appearances. He is satisfied with a fair outside; and seeks no farther. The openly wicked man is under no restraint, but that of law: he endeavours to keep clear of mischief; but *aims* at nothing else. The *decent* man confining his actions in a narrower compass, pays the same respect to the opinions of men, which the other does to the laws of the land. Thus the decent man is often seen at church: not to pay his devotions to God, or to confess his sins, or any thing else, that comes from his heart. With all this he troubles his head very little. But he considers it as a step to obtain the character of a *grave* and *serious* man. Who will distrust a grave and serious man, who goes constantly to church, and appears to have a sense of religion always about him.

Again,

Again, the *decent* man seldom gives any offence to others. You rarely hear him swear, or talk blasphemy, or ridicule scripture. Not that he reverences the name of God in his heart; or values scripture: but he sees that all such light behaviour gives offence to sober people; and makes them think the worse of the man in whom it appears.—Indeed, sometimes, when he is quite sure of his company—when he knows none are within hearing but men of his own stamp—he will then give a loose to his thoughts and language—then the oath comes glibly from him; or the obscene jest, or any thing bad that lies uppermost in his heart.

Again, with regard to his neighbour, his actions always appear fair and open—at least, he thinks every body believes so: tho he is often deceived in this matter, and the knavishness of his heart appears when he little suspects it.—In the meantime, he talks much of honesty; and gives many hints of his abhorrence of knavery.

The same regard for his character he preserves in private life. He is rarely seen in liquor, except among his choice companions; and all his secret pleasures are conducted with so much caution, that they are only at most, the subject of suspicion.

picion. At home indeed, he is furly, brutal, and ill-tempered; but when you see him transacting business abroad, you would think him perfectly affable, and courteous.

In short, his character is his only care; for this is the engine, with which he works on those, upon whom he has any designs. It is not *God*, but *man*, with whom he endeavours to keep fair. Common observers think he is what he professes. They who know him *better*, suspect him: and they who know him *intimately*, know well enough, that if he were turned inside out, he would appear the very lowest, dirtiest, and basest of mankind.—In short both the notoriously *wicked* man, and the *decent* man are equally men of the world, and alike intent to impose on the simplicity of others: the one only acts more covertly than the other.

The specious man also is among the many who are called. *He* is called, not only by the ordinary methods of God's grace; but by the strong sense he himself has of the excellence of virtue; as his whole behaviour is against conviction.—But tho the *decent* man is among those who are *called*; we cannot suppose him among those who are *chosen*. God values only the heart. Before him pretences only make us more guilty.

Not

Not that I would affirm the decent man to be worse than the profligate. He does less injury to society, as his example is less offensive : but whether he be not as far from the kingdom of heaven, I will not take upon me to say. The downright wicked man is perhaps as often brought to a state of repentance; as the cool, deliberate, hypocritical sinner. The corrupted heart of the former may be touched by some calamity ; and one extreme may produce another : but the hypocritical sinner has always lived, if I may so speak, within sight of his duty ; and yet his duty has never had any effect upon him.

Having thus considered the openly wicked man ; and likewise the specious and decent man ; let us next consider the truly good man. Here we shall find a very different character. In the decent man, all is appearance : in the good man, all is real. — In his religious duties he does not *sound a trumpet before him*, as our Saviour speaks ; as who should say, Now I am going to church — now I am going to the sacrament. — See how pious I am ; and how devout ! All this he abhors. His devotion is not seated in his eyes and hands, but in his heart. There reside faith, hope, and

and charity, with every other christian virtue, His communication is with his Almighty father in secret. He wants no eye upon *his* religious duties, but the eye of God.

Again, in his dealings with his neighbours, all is fair, and honest, and open from the very bottom of his heart. Have you a bargain to make with him? You need not be on your guard. He is as fearful of *defrauding* you, as you can be of being defrauded. It is not your knowledge of his fraud, but God's, of which he stands in awe. It is nothing to him whether *your* eye is upon him, or not. The eye of *God*, he knows, is always upon him. Does he profess an intention to serve you? He does not mean it as the cover of some deceit: or as a courtly expression that means nothing: you may depend upon it, he intends to serve you, if he can: and is as much disappointed as you are, if he cannot serve you.—In his charities too, (if he have wherewithal to bestow on his poor neighbours) it is the same. His left hand knows not what his right hand doeth. He seeks for no praise from men—no testimony; but the testimony of a good conscience.—In private life, he is equally amiable. His example is a continued lesson of instruction. It is his great happiness

pinets to make all happy around him. His good humour relieves, and softens the little asperities, which untoward circumstances, and wayward tempers are continually exciting in families. In short, he is truly and in earnest, every thing, that he pretends to be. He is truly pious, truly devout, truly charitable, and truly honest.---This is the man, who is both *called* and *chosen*. He is *called* as you, and I, and every body else are called: but *he* answers the call: and therefore he is *chosen*.

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to shew you what kind of men are *called*, and what kind of men are *chosen*. I have considered them under the three denominations of *abandoned* men—of *specious*, or *decent* men—and of truly *good* men. Not that these three kinds of people, comprehend all mankind: but their's seem to be the leading characters, of which all others are composed. People are either outwardly bad; or they put on the face of goodness; or they are really good. But, at the same time, these characters are variously compounded. All men for instance, who are outwardly *bad*, are not equally so. Some are openly prophane: others are only careless, and indifferent about their duty: and this in

VARIOUS

various degrees.—Nor again are all men *equally specious*. You find some men, tho the character perhaps is not very common, who may be hypocrites in religion; and yet kind to a neighbour. While again the *good* man himself is never found without some little mixture either of carelessness, or of vanity, or of something that clouds his virtue.—But God accepts his best endeavours, clouded as they are, with human infirmities; and esteems him the *good man*, in whose character religion makes the principal part.

Some people, one should suppose from their behaviour, are solicitous to know, what degree of goodness will carry them to heaven: as if they did not wish to be a scruple better than they need be. I should verily doubt, whether such nice calculators have any religion at all. It is plain, they wish not to have more, than is absolutely necessary: and I think a man can have very little religion, unless he wishes to have as much as he can.—God Almighty has not balanced things in this nice manner: at least he keeps this matter among the secrets of eternity. The rule *he* gives us, is, *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*: that is, do the best you can yourselves, and then trust God, through the merits of

Christ.

Christ. God will chuse such for his servants, as follow this rule the best.

Let us conclude with one consideration more, (but it is a consideration truly awful) that if among the *many* who are called, so *few* are chosen—if among the many wanderers through this vale of misery, so few gain the true road—how ought we to fear, lest we should be found rather among the *many*, than among the *few*; and how ought this to awaken every power within us to endeavour to gain a place among those blessed few!

May God, of his infinite mercy assist us in seeing our true interest, that we may pursue it as we ought; and that as we are among the *many*, who are *called*, we may be also, in God's good time, through Christ, among the *few*, *who are chosen*.

SERMON VI.

NUMBERS 32, xxxiii.

IF YE HAVE SINNED AGAINST THE LORD, BE
SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.

ON entering the promised land, a party of the Israelites made a request to Moses for some grounds, which they thought lay very conveniently for them. Moses consented on certain conditions : but was very earnest, that the conditions he prescribed, should be faithfully observed. In his language on this occasion, he uses the words of the text. He represents sin, under the strong image of a person, who should certainly find out every transgressor among them ; who did not punctually

punctually perform the condition to which he had agreed.

As the image which Moses gives of Sin's finding out every sinner, is a very happy one; I shall dwell a little upon it in the following discourse, and shew you *first* the certainty of what the text threatens, that our Sin will find us out; and *secondly*, the means of avoiding the mischief it threatens.

In the *first* place, our Sin will certainly find us out. Some men indeed are so hardened in wickedness—so totally lost to conscience, and reflection, that they are long able to hide themselves, as it were, from Sin. They are so intrenched in wickedness, that Sin cannot find a single opening to come at them. Such persons may live long before their Sin finds them out. It must wait for opportunities—a time of sickness, or a time of distress, when a man's wickedness has drawn some heavy calamity upon him. Then his Sin will be sure to find him out. It will hold up a frightful mirror before him; and shew him, that himself has been the cause of all he suffers.

It is for this reason, that jails, and other places of confinement, are now often most happily contrived

trived with single cells, where criminals are confined apart, and not suffered to mix together. By intercourse they encourage each other in wickedness. But when a guilty wretch is left entirely to himself, where he has nothing to converse with but his own thoughts, then it is possible, his Sin may find him out ; and bring him to serious reflection. —But I am speaking of the wickedest part of mankind, such as are shut out from society, or in dread of being cut off from it. No such wretches are now my hearers.

Crimes however are not confined to jails, and outlawries. The *whole world*, we know, *lieth in wickedness*.* Vice peoples it, in all its variety of shapes—and in all its variety of guilt—open, and covert, from the profligate man of pleasure; *who glories in his shame*, to the sly old knave, who has nothing but softness on his tongue; and nothing in his heart, but a design to cheat you.

Now among all the sinners of which this wicked world consists, not one shall escape. The text will surely be fulfilled upon each. At some time or other his Sin will surely find him out ; and call him to a severe account.

Even

Even if a man's desperate hardened nature—or if sudden death, or other circumstance, should prevent his Sin's finding him out in this world, he has not yet made his escape. His Sin will continue the pursuit into the next, where it will have him at a dreadful advantage.

Sin being thus represented as a merciless creditor—of an unforgiving temper—demanding debts with the utmost rigour, let us see how we may best avoid the mischief it threatens.—This

I proposed next to consider. In the first place then, as we are assured in the text, that our Sin will certainly *find us out*, it is the part of wisdom to be beforehand with it, and *find it out first*. Sin can never find *us out*, but at some great disadvantage—when *it* is strong, and *we* are weak—when habits of wickedness have been formed; and we have suffered some mischief from them—or when our spirits are low, and we feel the world sinking under us.—But on the other hand, if *we* take the active part, and endeavour to find out Sin first, we prevent this bad effect.

It is in this case as in others of the same kind. If we are in debt, our debts, that is, our creditors, will find us out. But when we are beforehand,

and find out our debts ourselves, and take methods to pay them, we avoid all the bad consequences we should otherwise incur.—Let us then only take the same care in finding out our sins, as we do in finding out our debts, and we shall be safe; and it is the more necessary, as it is the more difficult. He who can number a few figures, may count his debts: They are, or may be, plain before him. But the deceit, and treachery of the heart lie deep; and it is often a difficult matter to come at our sins through the various doublings, and foldings, in which they are involved. The case is this: we not only suffer our passions, and appetites to lead us into sin; but we use our reason, which God hath given us for better purposes, to defend, and excuse our wickedness. Thus the drunkard will tell you of the little he spends in drinking—and of the occasional necessity of his taking refreshment; and by such excuses, would make you believe, he does only spend a little; and that little only when necessity requires: whereas, if the truth were known, this is a fellow, who spends as much in drinking, as would maintain his family in bread; and having gotten a vile habit of drinking, alledges this *habit* as a necessity.—Such a man, I fear, will never find out his

his Sin: but he may be assured, it will find him out, before it has done with him. It is not making excuses for our sins, and contriving to keep them out of sight, that will blot them out. You may as well attempt by excuses to silence a creditor's bill. For God's sake, therefore, let us make no excuses for our sins, but such, as will be admitted—some we humbly hope may be admitted—at the day of judgment. Repentance is the grand condition of the gospel; and the first act of repentance is to find out our sins.

Zaccheus, of whom St. Luke gives a very pleasing account, was an eminent instance of finding out his Sin. Zaccheus was a tax-gatherer, and had lived long in a habit of dishonesty. But as soon as God afforded him an opportunity of conviction, he immediately set about to find out his Sin.—God Almighty gives us gracious calls and opportunities of one-kind, or other, as he gave Zaccheus. Many of us turn a deaf ear to all these calls of grace. Some however attend to them. Zaccheus did. If he had rejected this call—this opportunity, which God gave him, he might have gone on in the wicked arts of knavery, and deceit, till at length, at the close of life, his Sin might have found him out, and harrassed him with the dreadful recollection of all his past

wickedness, when it was not in his power to make restitution, and now too late for mercy. But as he found out his Sin before that dreadful time, he repented, changed his heart, and life, became first an honest man, and then a happy christian.

Judas Iscariot was a frightful instance of the contrary. Tho he had had every opportunity under his blessed master's instruction of finding out his Sin, tho he daily heard the gospel preached—and had daily before his eyes the example of the holy Jesus, yet he continued hardened, growing worse and worse, till having filled up the measure of his iniquity by betraying his master, his Sin at length dreadfully found him out, and filling him with horror, drove him to madness, and desperation.

Such examples should have their proper weight, When we think of Zaccheus, let us remember the happy fruits of finding out our Sin. When we think of Judas Iscariot, let us remember the dreadful consequences of suffering it to find us out.

Being thus convinced of the necessity of finding out our Sin, the next great step to be taken, is to endeavour to obtain pardon for it. Whatever difficulty there may be, amidst the many corruptions

ruptions, and doublings of our hearts in finding out our sins, the method of obtaining pardon, (thank God) lies plain before us.

Every transgression of the law is sin; and every sin becomes naturally unpardoned guilt; that is, we have naturally no claim to pardon. But it hath pleased Almighty God to reveal to us a gracious mode of obtaining pardon. Our own repentance must lead the way, and qualify us for the benefit of Christ's atonement. Christ's merits will not save us without our repentance---and repentance can be of no avail without the merits of Christ.

Full of guilt however as we all are, some are not disposed to accept the free grace of God. The man of reason will ask, why God might not pardon us freely on our repentance, without the merits of Christ?

What God *might* do, is one thing, what God hath declared, he *will* do, is another. If we understood all nature around us---and could give a reason for every thing we see---we might then have some pretence for inquiring about the manner, in which God hath offered salvation to man; through the merits of Christ. But till that time, let us accept the *benefit* with thankfulness, without cavil-

ing at the *means*. If there is *any thing plainly revealed* in scripture, it is the atonement which Christ made for the sins of mankind. Every part of scripture; the old Testament, as well as the new, discovers to us by prophecy, type, or reality, this gracious truth. Indeed no reason can be given for the death of Christ, but that of making an atonement for sin. If we disbelieve the doctrine, I do not see how we can believe the scripture. And indeed we generally find that such as renounce the atonement, garble scripture in their own peculiar way.

If indeed we inquire into the *nature* of this mystery, and ask, *how* the death of Christ can be any satisfaction to God for the sins of mankind——there we are silent. But then our question recurs, Is this the only point, of which we are ignorant? Can we tell how this massy globe of the earth, on which men have lived for so many thousand years, hath continued through all that space of time, to swim in the air? It rests on nothing but air: it is in continual motion, tho we do not perceive its motion. Can we account for that force which holds it in balance, and keeps it from rolling to one side or the other? Let us then have the modesty to conceive, there may be other

other things as well as the atonement of Christ, *equally mysterious, yet undoubtedly true.* They who believe this earth hangs poised in the air, on the credit of philosophers, cannot *reasonably* reject the idea of Christ's atonement, on the credit of scripture.

Since then God Almighty hath thus put the means of our salvation, in a manner, in our own power, by leaving us at option, whether we will accept, or not, the terms he hath offered: let us not be so lost to ourselves, as to go on in any sinful course, till at length our Sin find us out; but let us manfully endeavour to find it out first, wherever it lurks among the deceits of our own hearts, or among the temptations of the world: ---Infidelity, where proper means of obtaining evidence have been neglected, is certainly a high offence. This sin, and whatever else we detect, let us bring to the throne of grace, and implore God's pardon through the merits of Christ.---When we have *done our utmost* to discover our sins, still it is to be feared, our best endeavours will not be wholly effectual. Many ignorances, and negligences will still be left behind; and each of us, in the true spirit of christianity, should lay his hand

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on his breast, and in the language of the penitent publican, cry out, *God be merciful to me a sinner!*

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SERMON VII.

2 PETER 2, XV.

THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE RIGHT WAY, AND
GONE ASTRAY; FOLLOWING THE WAY OF BAL-
LAAM, THE SON OF BOSOR, WHO LOVED THE
WAGES OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

ST. PETER, in this passage, alludes to a very extraordinary man, and a very extraordinary story, the story of Balaam, which I have just been reading to you in the lesson of the day: and as it may, in some parts, be apt to mislead you, I thought it not amiss to accompany it with an explanation.

In the following discourse, therefore, I shall first explain to you the character of Balaam; and shall

shall then point out to you such uses, as arise from the story of this singular man.

Balaam lived at that period of the Jewish history, when the Israelites were taking possession of the promised land. The Amorites, who had opposed their progress, had suffered a total defeat. A second battle had reduced the dominions of Basan; and the victorious army, now incamped on the banks of Jordan, was preparing to enter the country of Moab.

Balak, the son of Zippor, was king of Moab at that time. This prince terrified at the approach of so numerous a host; which, as he expressively phrased it, was like *the ox, licking up the grass of the field*; and dreading to be involved in this general ruin, cast his despairing eyes around for assistance. Human arms, he found, were vain. The victorious army marched under the conduct of supernatural power. Laying aside therefore all design of regular defence, he resolved to oppose them with their own weapons; and to call supernatural power to his assistance also.

In this design who could serve him like Balaam, the son of Beor—Balaam, the favoured

him, enabled to withstand the power of his foes pre-

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prophet of those times, to whom all the nations around, in their difficulties, had recourse.

This holy man lived at a distance from Moab, on the banks of the Euphrates, in the country of Mesopotamia.*

The distance however was no obstacle. Messengers were immediately dispatched, with the *wards of divination* in their hands, to bring the prophet to curse Israel; and make them an easy prey.

But the matter was not so easily accomplished. The prophet was forbidden by God, to have any hand in cursing a favoured people; and the messengers returned with disappointment to their king.

Balak however still persisted. Messengers more honourable were sent to Balaam; and offers more proportioned to the service, were made. But Balaam's firm soul was proof against the lure of riches. *If Balak, said he, would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, my God, to do less, or more.*

God however permitting him, he at length accompanied this honourable embassy to the court of Balak. But here he persevered in the same noble and upright behaviour. Instead of hu-

mouring

* DEUTERONOMY 23, iv.

mourning the king's passions, and cursing his enemies, he supported the character of a great prophet; and spake boldly the truths, which had been delegated to him. And when the angry king, in the agony of keen disappointment, smiting his hands together, cried out, *I called thee to curse mine enemies; and lo thou hast blessed them these three times; still Balaam held the same noble language; Spake I not unto thy messengers, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver, and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad.* And when the king, overcome with his perverseness, dismissed him at length with threatenings, he retired with a dignity, which became the character, he had supported.—All this was surely great, and noble, and equal to any thing on record. We admire the intrepidity of the man, his contempt of riches, and firmness in supporting the prophetic character.

But alas! we have seen only the outside of Balaam. Balaam like many other men, had two characters; a public character, and a private one. What we have seen, was only Balaam's public character—that appearance, which he was desirous to put on, in the sight of men. Let us now examine

examine him a little more closely, and endeavour to shew, what Balaam's real character was.

Balaam, tho a prophet of the Lord, and endowed with extraordinary gifts, was certainly a very bad man.—St. Peter assures us *he loved the wages of unrighteousness*; notwithstanding his pretended contempt for riches. Why God made use of such an instrument for a prophet, we can as little conceive, as why Christ made an apostle of Judas Iscariot. Good reasons, no doubt, there were for both, tho we cannot discern them. However these are points with which at present, we have nothing to do. A bad-man Balaam certainly was; and to those, who knew him intimately, had undoubtedly given many instances of a bad heart, and corrupt practice.—Let us not however proceed on supposition against Balaam; but examine the several facts, which lead to his detection.

Observe; when Balak's messengers first came to him, we are told, they brought with them the *rewards of divination*. What the *rewards of divination* were, we know not. It is probable however they were only an ordinary recompence—what he had often received from other people; and what had not the force of a temptation in his eye.

eye. Thus far then Balaam appears not to have shewn any great eagerness to attend the call of Balak.

The next message was more substantial. *Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: for I will promote thee to very great honour; and will do, what soever thou sayest unto me.* Here was a temptation of a more splendid nature. This might have shaken a firmer soul than Balaam's. Of his it seems to have taken entire possession. From the moment, this message rang in his ears, he seems to have given himself totally up to views of ambition. What had he to do to consult God a second time about going? Had he not had his answer already? *Thou shalt not go with them: thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.*

God however (who often suffers wicked men to be hurried on by their own obstinate perverseness; and out of that perverseness, works his own wise purposes) at length permitted him to go—that is, he gave him such permission, as our blessed Saviour once gave Iscariot, *What thou dost, do quickly.*

Balaam probably now expected, that having gained one point, he might gain another; and that as he had been suffered to go to Balak, he might also be permitted to curse his enemies. We have

grounds

grounds for this supposition from a passage in Deuteronomy;* in which it is said, that *God would not hearken unto Balaam*. Why *hearken*? It does not appear from the face of the story, that Balaam had been pleading openly with God on this subject. It must relate then to some secret pleading. And 'tis not unlikely, that in the midst of a train of ambitious thoughts, in which the apostate prophet might be indulging his corrupt heart, the angel of God withstood him: I call it probable, because some offence he had certainly committed after his departure; and we find no open one recorded.

And here we have a little insight into Balaam's character in domestic life, where the true character of a man is generally the best known. It appears from the history, that altho he was accompanying the messengers of Balak, yet at the time, when the angel met him *he was riding with his two servants*; and that nobody else, as the expression leads us to suppose, was in company. His servants undoubtedly were enough acquainted with their master; and had seen him many times in violent fits of passion. Before *them* therefore he was under no restraint; and then it was, that he shewed that instance of unmanly rage and *madness*, as the apostle

call's

* DEUTERONOMY 23, v.

calls it; * which, in public, the holy man could unquestionably have disguised under the appearance of meekness, and condescending forbearance.

But whatever his other infirmities might have been, it must be allowed, that at the court of Balaam he certainly behaved with becoming dignity. His prophecies were delivered in the most manly spirit of independence; and have been the admiration of all ages for sublimity both of sentiment, and expression.

It is true: but what is that to Balaam? Balaam, we conceive was only the instrument, through which these prophecies were delivered.—This truth God seems to have established by the miracle of the ass; which, however ridiculed by prophane wits, seems to have been exceedingly proper to convince the back-sliding prophet, that the organs of every creature are in the hands of the Creator; and that he could, and would, impress them, as he pleased. The language of Balaam therefore was no more his own, than the language of his ass;—and was indeed as great a miracle. He himself seems to have laboured no point so much, as to convince the king, through his great fear, as it should seem, of giving him offence, that he was a mere agent in the whole

whole affair—and that he *could neither speak more nor less, than what the Lord put into his mouth*: implying at the same time, he was sorry for the restraint, and regretted, that he could not serve the king in the way he desired.

It was soon however in his power to serve him in a way altogether as effectual.

His prophecies being uttered, the design of heaven was now answered; and the instrument was thrown aside. The wicked Balaam was now left entirely to pursue the schemes of his own mad ambition. He had been ordered to depart; with which order he seems publicly at least to have complied. The text says, *he went to his place*. If he went home, it is plain however that he returned. And now he effected that grand scheme, which he hoped would be as destructive to the Israelites, as if he had cursed them.

A great jewish historian* tells us, that Balaam informed the king, he could never subdue the Israelites, unless they should be disobedient to their God; and intrusted him how to make them so. This account of Josephus is confirmed in the sacred story, both by Moses, who says, that *Balaam caused the Israelites to commit trespass against the* VOL. I. G *Lord;*

* JOSEPH. ANTIQ. B. 4. C. 8.

Lord; * and also by St. John, who informs us, that *Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication*: † and the whole story, thus pointed out, seems to be written at length in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers, where we find it recorded, that Israel provoked God by revolting through the artifices of Balaam; and that a plague was inflicted on them, as a punishment, which swept off twenty-four thousand men.

Thus Balaam performed the great service he intended for the king of Moab by setting the Israelites at variance with God. It was now time to expect his reward—that *promotion to great honour*, for which he had given his character, and his soul—and he received his reward in that way of cruel disappointment, in which wicked men, sooner, or later, always receive it.

Vexed at the treachery of Moab, Moses, at length, by God's appointment, ordered the army of the Israelites to march against them, under the conduct of Phineas. The Moabites shewed no backwardness in meeting them, led on probably by the delusions of Balaam, who might assure them,

* NUMBERS 31. xvi. — † REVELATIONS 2. xiv.

them, that as Israel had now sinned, the Lord would deliver them into the hands of their enemies.

Be this as it may, it is certain, that Balaam appeared in arms himself in the field, either to encourage the Moabites; or in some way to give the fullest testimony in his power of his zeal for Balak.

The event of the battle was fatal to the cause of Moab. Here their whole army was destroyed, and—here perished the wicked Balaam,* and all his schemes of ambition perished with him.

Such was the character, and such the end, of this strange, infatuated, inconsistent man! Favoured by the Almighty, as he had been, and revered by all the nations around, who considered him as their resource in every difficulty, what could make him greater than he was? What did Balaam want to complete the greatest and most glorious character that can adorn a human being? Respect, honour, and deference, attended all his motions. Where Balaam, the son of Beor, appeared, the princes of the earth were only secondary characters.

Such

* NUMBERS 31. VIII.

Such consequence did his sanctity, his wisdom, and the favour of the Almighty give him!

Of all this Balaam was fully sensible. He saw the advantages of the prophetic character; but so corrupt was he, so fœd in his views, that he considered these great talents, these gifts of heaven, in no other light, than as the means of procuring, under their disguise, the paltry trappings of a few worldly distinctions.

Of the melancholy history of this wicked man let us make its proper use.—Many are the truths it teaches.

It teaches the danger of giving way in the first instance to temptation. After we have been *once* conquered, we have lost half our strength. It is probable, the king of Moab, could not at first have prevailed on Balaam, with his *house full of silver and gold* to have taken up arms in favour of an idolatrous prince, and against God's favoured people: but at a less price he was able to make him begin his journey, tho it was plainly contrary to the will of God. All the rest followed of course.

Again, we are taught by this story, that a religious disposition makes always the greatest, and
best

best part of every man's character. Shining talents are, in general, what men desire; as they procure them the admiration of the world: but, we see in God's sight it is otherwise. He often gives them to the most unworthy. A good heart is worth them all; and will make us illustrious, when all the rest become nothing. This even single is of value; while talents, without a heart, often ruin their possessor; are a nuisance to mankind, and make us only the more conspicuously infamous.

We learn farther from this story, the dreadful state of being, what the scriptures call *forsoaken of God*. God, we believe, will never forsake any one, who earnestly desires his assistance. But when we reject his grace, through our own obstinate wickedness, we may place ourselves in a state almost beyond recovery. Balaam in the early, and innocent part of his life, was probably greatly favoured by God; till he began to think the king of Moab the better master. He then forsook God, and his strides to destruction were rapid.

But the most obvious use, that may be made of the story of Balaam, is to convince ourselves of the folly, and wickedness of acting under two

charac-

characters—of hiding a bad heart under the pretences of religion.—Let us consider the pains it costs; the constant attention to every word, and action. In fact, it would cost less to be good in earnest.—Besides, we deceive ourselves, if we think we can long deceive the world. Rarely did hypocrits ever carry its deceit to the grave.—But if we *could* deceive the world, and carry off our deceit, with our grey hairs, to the grave; (and I suppose this is as far as the most practised hypocrite can hope to carry it) is it worth while? Will the best gains of hypocrisy repay us for a bad conscience; or give us any solid return for the remorse of a death-bed?

What, may we suppose, were Balaam's sentiments, when he lay bleeding on the plains of Midian? when all his wicked vision was fled—when he found himself struck with the hand of death, destitute of all comfort upon earth; and of all hope from heaven? In those bitter moments, we may suppose, he saw things in their true light—in the agony of despair and horror, he was at length convinced of the folly, and wickedness of all his worldly schemes—his *Sin had now found him out*—and he exclaimed in earnest, (what in the hypocrisy of his soul, he had once

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uttered) *Oh ! that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my latter end might be like his !*

—May we all catch the warning voice ! and may God grant us grace to make a better use of it, through Jesus Christ our Lord !

SERMON VIII.

HEBREWS 11. xiii.

THEY CONFESSED, THAT THEY WERE STRANGERS,
AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH.



OUR passage through life is compared in holy scripture, to various things—sometimes to an arrow flitting through the air, which quickly strikes the mark it aimed at—sometimes to a race, in which we soon arrive at the destined goal—sometimes to a flower, which is to day in the field; to-morrow, cut down, and withered.—But no figure, I think, more beautifully, and more comprehensively describes it, than that of a journey, to which it is compared by the apostle in the text.

--The other figures, I have mentioned, give us an

an idea of some particulars only in the life of man---its hasty progress---its destined end---or its great uncertainty. But a journey seems to comprehend it in all its usual circumstances, from one end to the other---from the cradle to the grave. We may consider the whole world, in all its distinctions---rich, and poor---young, and old---wise, and foolish---gay, and thoughtful---all journeying to their great home. Some travel in a more expensive way with equipage, and attendants: others, in a humble manner, like the poor pilgrim with his staff: but all, in this confusion, and variety, are hastening to one great point---their everlasting home.

For your instruction therefore to day, I propose to mark a few of those strong lines of resemblance between a journey, and our passage through life; and shall endeavour to make such observations on each, as I hope may be useful to you.

The first great resemblance may be found in the various stages of each.---In the common journeys of this world, some are long; and marked of course, with a great variety of circumstances. Others again are short, quickly performed,

formed, and little varied with any particular occurrences.

Exactly thus is our great journey through life. The journey of some is long. They are many years in passing through their pilgrimage in this world—through its several stages of childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. Others again scarce pass through half this space, before they find themselves at their journey's end. They languish awhile under the pains of mortality, and are cut off in the flower of their age: while many begin, and finish their journey almost at the same time. What should this teach us, but, (as our Lord instructs us) to have our *loins girt, our lights burning*, and ourselves in constant readiness to set out, whenever we are called: for notwithstanding the likeness between a journey, and our passage through life, this difference, we must remember, exists between them---the former we conduct: in the latter we are conducted. In our great journey through life we cannot make the stages as we please. They are laid out for us. We have only to prepare ourselves properly for them.

A second great resemblance, which may be traced

traced between a journey, and our passage through life, arises from the various roads, which present themselves in both.—Every one accustomed to travelling, knows there are various roads commonly leading to the same place. Some are bad—others indirect—while there is generally but one, which is the best; and which every prudent traveller would wish to pursue.

Such too is our journey towards eternal life. This is the point, to which we all should take the best, and safest road: and all of us, who have any degree of seriousness, pretend to do it. Ask any, who are not quite abandoned, and they will tell you, they hope to go to heaven—that this at least is their aim: but through what a variety of paths do they often pursue it?—I do not mean here, by *different paths*, the different modes of religion, by which different persuasions of christians seek heaven. Far should I be from calling a sincere christian in any persuasion, tho differing from our own, a traveller in an indirect path. He may, in some points be in error—he may, in many points pursue the way, which we may not think best—yet if he be a pious, and good man, his path cannot possibly be much awry. By those therefore who travel in an *indirect path*, I mean

mean such only as in *any* persuasion, lead careles, inattentive lives—who tread the path of pleasure—who are given up too much to the world—and expect their chief happiness from it.—And yet these often pretend to be journeying towards their heavenly home—and perhaps they may persuade themselves they are sincere: but rarely, if ever comparing the path they take with that marked out in the word of God, they go thoughtless on—far—very far from the true path, which religion prescribes. It may be hoped indeed that all these wanderers will in time see their error; and at length arrive safely at their heavenly home. But what toil—what labour—what distress might they have prevented, if they had not suffered themselves to be led astray through all the bye-paths of pleasure, or worldly allurements; but had from the first pursued the direct road!—As for the downright wicked and irreligious, they are not properly travelling in an *indirect path*—they are travelling in a course directly *contrary* to what they ought—they never can get right, unless they return upon the paths which have misled them, and take a road entirely opposite to that, which they have hitherto pursued.

As

As a journey thus resembles our passage through life in being a progress through various stages to a defined end; so does it resemble it in the many difficulties, and inconveniencies, with which it is accommodated.——Whoever undertakes a journey—especially if it be a long journey, must expect to meet with many difficulties in pursuing it. His road, or his conveyance, or the weather, or his company, or his accommodations, or something, will be sure to present itself to him in the form of an inconvenience. He must lay his account for these things, and must not be disturbed when they occur, but pursue with ardour the end he aims at.

It is just thus in our passage through life. It is, and it is proper it *should be*, a state of trial to us all—a journey abounding with difficulties and disappointments of various kinds. No man can pass through life without meeting them. From our early youth they begin: and as we advance, our difficulties increase. The cares, and mischances of the world—or the knavery and malice of mankind—or sickness—or the ingratitude of friends—or the miscarriages, if not of ourselves, at least of our near connections, present us with a great variety of distress.——Then again, they who are of a feeling nature, have their compassion daily exercised by their

their fellow-travellers, whom they see toiling under their various burdens--whom, in many cases, they can but pity, and cannot relieve.---As we advance towards the end of life--as we enter the vale of years, new distresses arise. The infirmities of age--the decays of nature--the loss of old contemporary friends, and the difficulty of mixing with a younger generation, all tend to lessen our relish for the world--to wean us from it, and teach us more and more to depend on that happiness hereafter, which we can never hope to find here.

Another resemblance, nearly allied to the last, between a journey, and our passage through life, arises from the different manner, in which its different stages affect us.---When we first set out on a journey, fresh, and full of spirits, all is new to us--every thing amuses and entertains us--the country around--the change of scene--the variety of objects. But when we have travelled long, and are become weather-beaten--when we have experienced the common round and inconveniences of all travellers, we begin to be tired with the tediousness of our journey--nothing has its relish--the novelty is over--the fatigue remains--every country we pass through becomes little more, than the
repe-

repetition of the same scene: we hasten through it; and have no pleasure, but in the hope of getting home apace.

Just such is our journey:--at least, such it ought to be---through life. At first, during the warmth, and inexperience of youth, every thing strikes us with pleasure. The world is new to us---our spirits are high---our passions are strong---the gaieties of life get hold of us---and it is happy, if we can enjoy them with moderation and innocence. Now and then, we meet a rebuke from the world: but we lay it not to heart---youth is prone to forget untoward circumstances---and other objects catch our attention:---But as years come on---as the inconveniences of life increase, and the satisfactions arising from it diminish; we grow fatigued with so tiresome a march; and if we are *those strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, of whom the text speaks, we begin to think with pleasure of finishing our earthly toil; and feel a holy joy in the thought of resting from our labours in God's good time; and of being received quietly, and peaceably into our everlasting home.

From these inconveniences, which meet us in every stage, another resemblance arises, the last I shall

shall suggest, which is, that we must never expect to find, in a journey, the comforts we look for at home. At home, we have all those little conveniences about us, and little pleasures, in which the enjoyment of our lives so much consists; and which *home* only can administer. What we expect in a journey is mere refreshment to enable us to proceed. If our inn be not entirely what we wish, we bear it easily: it is of little consequence: it is the habitation only of a night. In the morning we are gone; and a few stages more will carry us home, where the fatigue of our journey will soon be forgotten.

Thus it is—thus at least it should be—in our passage to our heavenly home.—Many people have no idea of a *heavenly home*. Of *them* I speak not. They must, if they chuse it, wander about in this world, without any aim, till they drop into their graves; and must take the consequence.—But they, who set their faces towards the heavenly Jerusalem; and hope, in God's good time, to arrive at that blessed end of their travels, will await with holy hope for the happiness which there awaits them. They will always bear in mind, that this world is *only* a state of trial—a preparation—an inn—a mere stage towards their ever-

everlasting home. There only they expect ease after their painful travel—there only they expect real pleasure and heartfelt joy. The world may amuse them ; but on their arrival at their great home only, they hope for solid happiness.—Happy indeed are they, who can bring themselves to this blessed state—who can look with tender pity on the world around them, immersed in all the folly and madness of its delights, and joys ; and can with hearts full of tranquility, and holy hope, thank God, they are now on the point of being removed from a scene, in which they take so little delight.

Thus, my brethren, I have explained to you, that beautiful and instructive allusion of travelling, as the text expresses it, *like strangers and pilgrims on the earth*.—If then life is a journey ; and can be compared so properly to nothing else, let us consider it as such.

In the first place, let us not set our hearts upon any thing in it. In a journey many pleasing objects, as we pass along, strike our fancy—splendid houses—beautiful countries—rich lands, and well-furnished pastures : but we set our hearts on none of these things.—Why do we not set our hearts

upon them?—Because we know they are not ours. We know, we only pass by them. It would be ridiculous, we are well convinced, to set our affections on what we cannot possess.

And is not this just the case of the things of this world? Do a few days, or a few months, or a few years, give us any more real property in these things, than if they were the visions only of an hour?—For God's sake then let us at least be content. If we do not set our hearts on the beautiful things we see on a journey, because we cannot possess them; let us for the same reason withhold our affections from the things of this world. We know we can possess neither of them.—What is possession? Nothing surely, of which we may be deprived in a moment, can deserve that name.

If again, life is a journey, let us not loiter in it. In our worldly journeys—at least, where we are earnestly bent on any business of importance, we keep constantly going on. Whether the sun beam hot upon us, or whether the storm gather close behind, still we proceed.—Why should we do less in our heavenly journey? Let us then urge our way. Let us not be misled by trifles, and stop

and loiter, till the sun goes down, and leaves us in the dark.

Lastly, if life be a journey, let us keep the great end of it continually in view. We are journeying to our great home---the eternal mansion of spirits. What is there here to detain us from such an end? Our valuables are not about us: they are at home, at the end of our journey. Where our treasure then is, *there let our hearts be also*. It is for want of believing this great truth that we are misled. If we in earnest believed, that heaven is the place, where our treasure is, we should in earnest endeavour to seek it there.---Let us then strive to attain this blessed end of all our labours. It cannot be a slight possession, which our gracious Redeemer hath *purchased for us with his blood*. Let us change our trust in this world, therefore into faith in God through Christ. Let us be those *strangers, and pilgrims upon earth*, of whom the apostle speaks, looking for a mansion *prepared for us, in the heavens*---not like the unstable mansions of this world---but a city, which *hath foundations, whose builders, and founder is God*.

SERMON IX.

GENESIS 45. XXIV.

SEE THAT YE FALL NOT OUT BY THE WAY.

IN my last discourse I explained to you the very beautiful scripture-comparison of a journey; and shewed you, in how many instances, it bore a resemblance to our passage through life. I shall now shew you, *how we ought to behave to each other on this journey. See that ye fall not out by the way.*

These words were spoken by Joseph to his brethren, after he had made himself known to them in Egypt. He had loaded them with kindness; had made each of them a present; and had sent them away to their father. At the same time, considering the bad disposition of mankind in general; and the

the bad disposition which he knew by experience had formerly appeared in some of them, he gave them a charge *not to fall out by the way*—but to travel peaceably like brethren; and make their journey as comfortable to each other, as they could.

I intend, in the following discourse, to give the good patriarch's caution a more extensive sense; and to advise you to travel peaceably together through life; as he advised his brethren to travel peaceably together into Canaan.—I shall shew you *first*, what are the principal causes of our *falling out by the way*: and *secondly*, the reasons that should prevent it.

One of the principal causes of our *falling out by the way*, is the little pains we take in *governing our passions, and tempers*.—As it hath pleased God to make the same difference in the *dispositions* of men, as in their *persons*, we must expect in our journey through life, to meet with as many that differ from us in our humours, as in our faces. All this we should consider as matter of course. We should be prepared for it; and in order to make our journey easy, and pleasant, we should be forbearing, and moderate. To think we can pass quietly through life without this condescend-

ing temper, would be as absurd, as to suppose people could travel easily through a frequented road, without mutually giving way. How troublesome would it be to travel in such a road, if we were continually jostling, and elbowing every one who travelled in a contrary direction? And yet how seldom are we disposed, in our passage through life, to give way to others? We should often consider (what few of us do consider) that we have wrongnesses in our own dispositions; and that if we are displeased with an opposition to our humours, we ought to shew a condescension to the *humours of others*. The rich should particularly consider these things, whose ill-dispositions and petted tempers, are generally full fed with flattery and vanity. Among themselves indeed we commonly find a certain civility of manners, which is something like condescension, and in the common occurrences of their journey through life, keeps all tolerably quiet. But tho they may travel decently with their equals, they often treat their inferiors with great contempt. On the other hand those in low stations dare not shew their ill-humour to those above them; but often shew it with violence enough among each other;—in their families at home especially. Follow them

through the narrow and crooked paths of the world, and you will find them there,

there, and you will often see those, who have just before been cringing to their superiors, tyrannizing in their own houses with all the pride, and insolence, and ill-temper, which the mind of man can work up. Ill-usage perhaps is added to ill-humour, and the cottage, instead of being that peaceful habitation, in which poverty is changed into happiness, becomes the horrid dwelling of uproar, confusion, misery, and distress. Whereas, if the rich would behave to the poor with at least that decency of manners, with which they behave among themselves--and if the poor would behave to each other, with that inclination to oblige, which they shew to the rich--all would be well.

Now this condescension to each others humours would not only make travelling the road of life pleasant, but religious. With great wisdom therefore the gospel enjoins forbearance to each other, which not only produces good neighbourhood; but has certainly a tendency to improve our minds. He who never checks his ill-humours; but lets them take their free course, can have no idea of religious tranquility. Religious sentiments can never dwell in the mind of a man, who bursts into passion on every slight contradiction--on any little family accident--or public measure,

measure, which opposes his own opinion, however ill-informed.-----Whereas on the other hand, he who accustoms himself continually to check his ill-humours, gets the management of his temper into his own hands; and preserves his mind in that sweet tranquility, which in itself approaches nearly to virtue; but is at least the mansion, where self-denial---humility---benevolence, and all other christian virtues dwell.

Our ill-humours however are not the only cause of our *falling out by the way*: another great cause, is loading ourselves, on our journey, so much with the things of this world.----I mean loading our hearts with them---thinking the things of this world, things of the first importance.

If you begin to think your worldly goods of more value, than your religion, you will begin to take many ways of procuring them which religion forbids. You will begin to envy those, who have more of them than you have.---You will begin to desire what other people possess---and if your hearts be still more wicked, you will begin to contrive how to get possession of them.----Thus, instead of travelling peaceably together, you will be

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continually forming interested, perhaps wicked designs, on those you meet.

But you greatly mistake the matter, my brethren, if you think those only who are rich, form these mischievous designs. We see the same avarice, and love of the world, among those, who have little. Kings quarrel about empires : great men, about riches and honours ; but there is not one among you, my good neighbours, however little he may have, who has not enough to quarrel about.

Having thus seen the principal causes of our falling out by the way ; I shall now, as I proposed *secondly*, shew you the reasons, that should prevent it.

In the first place, the difficulties and dangers of our journey through life are mutual. It is a laborious passage, at one time or other, to us all. At present we ourselves may be free from suffering : but sooner, or later we must all expect to be sufferers ; and not merely the spectators of the misery of others. If no other affliction find us out, we shall certainly feel the distresses of sickness, or old age.

Now

Now the common effect of suffering together, is to endear people to each other.—Suppose you were in the midst of a storm at sea—and your lives given up for lost—would you be disposed, in that circumstance, to teize, and distress your fellow-passengers? Or, would not the article of common danger tend to soften your tempers; and make you lay aside all bitterness, and disposition to quarrel—nay incline you even to settle any quarrel, that had been subsisting; and by gentleness, and kind behaviour, to make the danger you are all in, more supportable to each?

Why cannot we then all consider ourselves in the same light? Our voyage indeed may be a little longer, than I have represented; the vessel, in which we are carried, is somewhat larger; and the passengers more numerous: but still the great point of resemblance holds. We are all embarked in one bottom, and have our mutual dangers to struggle with. Let us then consider ourselves in that light, and not teize, and fret each other; but with tenderness, and pity endeavour to lessen each others afflictions, that we may pass with more comfort through the storms of life.

A second reason, that should incline us to travel in

in a friendly manner together, is, that we are not only engaged in mutual difficulties; but we want the assistance of each other in removing these difficulties. Where is the man, who can travel only one stage in his journey through life without the assistance of others? We sometimes hear men of fortune calling themselves *independent*. And in one sense they may be independent. They need not depend on the humours, and will of any one; and may assert the right of acting freely for themselves on all proper occasions. This is real independence. But still in another sense, the greatest man on earth cannot be called independent; inasmuch as he must always depend on the labours of others. It is this, which provides necessities for him: it is this, which furnishes him with *purple and fine linen, and sumptuous fare*. If the labourer refuse to work, he must starve, it is true; but the man of fortune must starve with him. It seems therefore as if God Almighty, in his infinite wisdom, had purposely laid on mankind this mutual obligation of assisting each other, as a mean to keep them in peace, and happiness. The variety of stations among men, points it out. If the beasts of the field quarrel, it might be expected. They are really independent. They want not the assistance

ance of each other. But that men should prey on men when they cannot live without mutual assistance, would be wonderful, if the commonness of it did not make it so familiar. St. Paul, alluding to an old fable, shews the necessity of this mutual intercourse; and the mischief that arises from the want of it; concluding, that *the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor the hand to the feet, I have no need of you.* None of us is compleat in himself; but wants the eyes; or the hands; or the strength; or the wisdom; or the learning; or the courage; or something, in which his neighbour must befriend him. Is it not right then, that he should consider himself as under the necessity of affording the assistance which he must receive; shall he receive the use of another man's strength, and give him no return?

The rich man perhaps answers, he does give him a return: he gives him money for his labour.

True: but in the light in which we should consider the matter his money is no return. It is a return I grant you, in the eye of the law: but it is no return in the eye of the gospel. When I give my money for the labour of others, I give it only to procure necessities for myself. The labourer's hands are as necessary to me, as my money is to him.

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Our wants are mutual. I pay therefore only for my own advantage. I pay nothing to humanity. There is no kindness here. But every man alive should consider, there is a debt due to others, which money, paid for labour, cannot pay. It can only be paid by those mutual good offices, which we all may want, and which we all should give. And tho' the rich do not so frequently want these occasional good offices as the poor; yet such is the mutability of human affairs—and such the variety of circumstances incident to human life, that no man can say he is in a situation above being obliged to his inferiors.——As to the obligations which arise to the poor from the wealth of the rich, they come properly under another head. We here consider the obligations only which arise from the need we have of mutual assistance.

The advantages however of this world should not alone induce us to travel peaceably together; we should consider our journey farther, as extending to the next. This world itself is but a stage. We are travelling to eternity.——Would we only consider this great point in its true light—would we only consider what it is to live through eternity—when after the lapse of a thousand ages, we shall be

be no nearer the end of our being, than when we first began—one should think it would seem as absurd in our short passage through life to spend our time in quarrelling about the trifling things of this world, as it would be for a person, intent on some important journey here, to be continually stopping; and, with the folly of a child, employing himself in gathering sticks and straws.

It is the circumstances of things, which make them more, or less absurd. Should we see a man, at any time, employ himself wholly in getting money, making that the sole purpose of his life, we should think him, if we thought reasonably, absurd enough. But if we should see a man, in the article of death, with glazed, and ghastly eyes, with cold, and quivering hands endeavouring to count his money, and sort his bags, we should think it shocking to the last degree.—Why should we think so?—Because his dying hour presses on him; and it is melancholy to see him pay an attention to trifles, in a moment of such awful visitation.

Tho in every light therefore it is surprizing to see men take a pleasure in teizing each other in their journey through life; yet when we consider the great end, that is before us—when we consider, that

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that in a few years at longest—perhaps in a few days, or perhaps even before the glass has run its hour, we may enter the never-ending journey of eternity—to teize, and fret each other, with such thoughts about us, is something like counting money-bags in the article of death.—Let us then always have such thoughts as these in reserve, which will naturally be a check against *falling out by the way*.

The last consideration I shall press upon you, to induce you to travel peaceably together, shall be drawn, not only from your being fellow-men, but fellow-christians. Christianity is indeed with many little more than a name. People take their ideas of christianity, from the world; not from their bibles.——But the world, my brethren, is a bad teacher of christianity. It is a wicked book; and will give you doctrines very contrary to those of christianity. It will shew you, that tricking, and deceit of various kinds, are very consistent with christianity---that a man may pursue his own interest by every means in his power---that he may deceive his neighbour, and make his advantage of sim- plicity, and take many other methods of getting money, and yet may pass for a christian—that he may

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be abusive, malicious, and revengeful; and be called a christian notwithstanding.—These are the doctrines of christianity, which you will learn from the world.

But they, who take their notions of christianity from their bibles, will find a different account. There you will find, that to be true christians, whatever the world may teach, you must be moderate, and temperate, and quiet, and inoffensive, and meek, and gentle, and compassionate, and forgiving. There you will find, that you should all consider yourselves as the servants of God—as the children of one family—equally redeemed by the blood of Christ—and equal heirs of the kingdom of heaven—that in these lights, you should all consider yourselves as brethren; and as such should travel peaceably together through this vale of mortality to your eternal home.

What happiness would arise to mankind from this peaceable mode of travelling! A family in peace is a pleasing sight. Were this happiness spread over a country, the effect would indeed be blessed. But if it were extended over the world, the blessing would be beyond calculation.

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SERMON IX.

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We have a beautiful picture of this happiness, given us by the prophet Isaiah; in which all nature is introduced in perfect harmony under the influence of the gospel. The rage and violence of man is totally subdued. Guilt is changed into innocence. *The wolf dwells with the lamb—the leopard lies down with the kid. A little child may lead them:—the meekness of the gospel calms, and conducts the most furious passions. Even in cases, which threaten the most danger, and mischief, innocence would be safe. The sucking child might play on the hole of the asp, or put its hand into the cockatrice-den. Every thing would be at peace. Nothing could hurt or destroy. The earth would be full of the knowledge of the Lord; as the waters are spread over the depths of the sea.*

Such would be the effect at large of christianity. But this splendid vision was never intended to be realized on earth. The prophet only meant to give us a foretaste of the blessings of religion. Mad ambition, thirst of power, revenge, avarice, and all the evils that infest mankind, will ever turn this world into a scene of violence, and bloodshed. In a state of trial therefore we must lower our ideas of gospel happiness, and must comfort ourselves with the scripture consolation, that

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SERMON X.

ACTS 16. xxx.

WHAT SHALL I DO TO BE SAVED?

WHEN St. Paul was preaching the gospel at Philippi, he drew upon himself a persecution from some of the chief men of that city by an act of charity, which happened to interfere with their gains. He was accused therefore to the magistrates on a false pretence, and thrown into prison. At midnight, he, and his companion Silas sang praises to God: and their heavenly strains being heard from a remote corner of a dark prison, (the *inner-prison* it is called in the text) attracted, we are told, the attention of the prisoners;

on many of whose hardened hearts such rapturous devotion might probably have had some effect.

In the midst of this song of praise a violent earthquake shook the prison--whether it was a mere natural event, or it had some connection with the case of the apostles, we are not informed. The locks, and bolts however of the prison-gates burst asunder, and all was laid open. The jailer alarmed at this dreadful event, rushed into the prison; and supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword, and would have killed himself. But

Paul, seeing his frantic action, cried out, *Do thyself no harm: we are all here.* The jailer struck with the composure of the apostle in a moment of such alarm, and with the dignified manner in which he spoke, seems to have felt that instantaneous conviction, which hardened sinners sometimes feel; he was stung at once with the recollection of his own guilty life, and conceiving St. Paul to be that preacher of righteousness, which he pretended to be, and which the miracle he had just wrought, seemed to prove, fell down before him, crying out, *What shall I do to be saved?*

This is a question, my brethren, which concerns usually as well as the jailer, and is in fact the most

serious question, that can be asked. A mortal man, who is conscious, that he has a soul within him, which must go off his death, into a place of happiness, or misery, cannot avoid, one should think, being very solicitous about the event. It is certainly a point, which deserves our first attention, whether we shall be happy or miserable to all eternity.* It is a question therefore, one should suppose, that would be continually recurring to our minds; and never forgotten in the midst either of business, or pleasure.

But in fact we find it far otherwise. It is a question which seldom disturbs any of us; tho' the *best*, as well as the *worst*, have need of its frequent admonition. That the *best* amongst us, as well as the *worst*, have frequent occasion to ask ourselves this serious question, *What shall we do to be saved*, shall be the subject of the following discourse.

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* There is no doctrine, as which well-meaning christians have cavilled more, than at the eternity of future punishments. But surely that bold unauthorized manner, in which some of our divines have determined this point, in vindication, as they say, of divine justice, is somewhat presumptuous. They had better, I think, drop their conjectures, which can never be satisfactory, because they are unfounded; and leave this matter in the hands of a just God, who will, no doubt, in his own righteous way, equalize punishment, and crime.

They, who have least to answer for, know enough of themselves, to make their salvation not a matter of perfect ease. The best of us on looking into his own heart, must see enough to give him some apprehensions at meeting his righteous judge, on the great day of accounts. Tho his judge is the *God of mercy*, yet his mercy we know, is tempered with justice: and how often we have laid ourselves open to that justice none of us can be ignorant. Tho we may not have been guilty of any great sins, yet our offences notwithstanding may be numberless.——How languid are we often in our devotion to God!—how unthankful to him for his blessings!—how unmindful of his continual presence; not suffering that great check to have its proper influence on our lives!—how inattentive are we to the wonderful mercies of our redemption through Christ!—how cold and unproductive is our faith!—how little do we trust God in our afflictions—or depend upon him as our supreme happiness!—how much more valuable do we esteem his temporal, than his spiritual blessings!—how attached are we to the world!—how backward, when we read the scriptures, in applying their precepts, and examples to ourselves! how apt are we to be led away by the vicious fashions

of the world, contrary to our own sense of what is right!—how high an opinion have we often of ourselves!—how little do we feel of that great christian virtue, humility!—how apt are we to take offence, and imbibe prejudices for trifles!—what a variety of bad thoughts do we often encourage, which tend to envy, malice, pride, impurity, self-love, and vanity!—what wrongnesses do such thoughts produce in our actions, in our tempers, in our behaviour!—how little guarded are we often in our conversation, injuring the characters of others, and spreading scandal, and defamation, without considering that golden admonition of scripture not to do to others, what we should think it wrong to have done to ourselves!—Our example too may have been as little our care as our conversation, and we may often perhaps by our unguarded actions have led others farther than we have gone ourselves.—In short, how often *have we left undone those things, which we ought to have done; and done those things, which we ought not to have done?*

I run over all these points of miscarriage, to which numberless others might be added, because in some of them the *best* of us offend. Let us then

see what ground amidst all this frailty, we have for *hope*.

My argument supposes, that in all these instances of wrong behaviour, there are no *bad habits* contracted--no *wilful sins* committed--but that in our general conduct we endeavour to *please God*; and when we discover any wrongness in our hearts, or lives, we immediately endeavour to correct it: so that we are still getting ground, in the management of our thoughts, of our temper, or of some other wrongness, which we discover in ourselves.

Now people in this situation have surely ground for humble hope in the mercies of God: for the his mercy is tempered, as we know it is, by justice; yet we have reason to hope from the gospel-covenant that his justice again is tempered by the mediation of Christ. So that they who live in an habitual desire to please God, and get the better of their wrongnesses as they discover them, may notwithstanding their frailties, apply to themselves, that most comfortable doctrine of the gospel, that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*.

God indeed is always represented under the idea of a kind and gracious father. Suppose therefore any of you had a child, who in the whole of his behaviour was desirous to please you; and if he ever did

did any thing from the folly and precipitancy of youth; to displease you, (which no doubt, would often be the case) he was sorry for it, and endeavoured to amend his fault; could you treat such a child with harshness? Would you not rather be inclined to forgive the offences of your little penitent?—And can we think we have more mercy than the *God of mercy* himself? especially, when our offences have so powerful a mediator to plead for them.

Let those then who are troubled with too scrupulous a conscience, take comfort in the mercies of God. But at the same time let them be *assured* they live under a *constant desire of pleasing him*. Under this assurance let them humbly hope that as a *father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him*. He hath compassion on our infirmities, for he *knoweth whereof we are made; he remembereth that we are but dust*.

But if the *righteous scarcely are saved*—that is, I presume, if the sincere christian with all his frailties about him, is saved, not through any merits of his own; but merely through the mercies of a Redeemer—where shall the *unrighteous and sinner appear*? Where shall he appear, who hath no
grace,

grace, no favour to expect—no good works of his own to offer—no desire to please God—no repentance to plead for guilt—no merits of a Saviour to stand between him and justice? Those merits can only be pleaded by penitent sinners. A state of *known sin* excludes all claim.

It is humbling—very humbling, no doubt—to see the well-intentioned man, who wishes in all things to please his Creator, make so many false steps in life; and as we have just seen, living in a constant warfare between his conscience, and his duty—endeavouring always to act right, but frequently getting wrong—it is very humbling, no doubt, to see all this, yet such is the situation of a state of trial.——But it is shocking beyond measure to see wickedness, without the least check from duty, making such horrid strides in all places around us, wherever we cast our eyes—to see men live without the least sense of God in the world—utterly thoughtless of what they are to *do to be saved*—and as utterly despising that mercy, to which they are indebted for every breath of air they draw.

The grand corrupters of mankind—it is a melancholy truth, but is a truth—are those of the higher orders.——Fashions in morals, as well as

in dress, descend; but never ascend. The profligacy of an age takes its colours from the leading members of society. When the higher orders are irregular, the lower will be so likewise. In a private family we find this generally the case: it is likewise in a community.

The lower orders of *our country* cannot always I fear, look up to the best examples. They to whom God hath given large possessions, instead of being stewards, as the scripture enjoins, of what they possess, spend it too often merely on themselves---in expensive amusements---in riot and gaming---in debauchery of various kinds; inflaming, and indulging by turns their worst passions---neglecting of course all moral and religious duties; and often closing the scene with rank infidelity. The gospel quarrels with them; and their only hope of *being saved* depends on quarrelling with the gospel. If the gospel be true, all is over.

This picture I hope, does not in its *full deformity*, resemble the higher orders amongst us; but some of its features I fear, are too commonly found.

As nearly as they can, the lower orders follow. Expensive amusements they cannot indulge. The tavern, and gaming-table are supplied by the ale-house.

house. There sits the drunkard besetting his reason--his senses--and changing his very form into a bloated carcase, merely for the gratifications of a beast. He thinks not of his character--his health--his business--or his poor distressed family; whom he leaves to misery, and the pity of others.

Oaths, in these lenient times, cost nothing. In the use of oaths the lower orders perhaps exceed their pattern. Merciful God! What a *mass of oaths and curses* from fleets, from armies, from the city, from the country, in the course of each single day, provoke thy Almighty vengeance!--In higher life the profane oath is under some restraint. In many companies it would give offence, and is therefore checked. But what shall we say of that man, who can check his oath, when he pleases; and does check it, before those, whose good opinion he wishes to preserve:--while before God, who has so absolutely forbidden it, he is under no restraint? A practice so horridly affronting to the Almighty, and to which no advantage of any kind is attached, looks like--*soliciting damnation*.

A disregard also to the duties of religion may be shewn by the lower orders without expence. Here they emulate--they can hardly exceed their superiors. Sunday is equally disregarded by both;

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and made a day of amusement. The very intention of that good old day, so revered by our ancestors for its religious use, is now in a manner forgotten.

Thus the contagion of vice meets us in every place, modified only with a few different degrees of decency. And what is still more shocking, we seldom see those reform, who have lived long in the practice of it. Their habits of wickedness become so strong, so interwoven with their nature, that they rarely break them. A drowning wretch, floundering on a plank, and struggling for life, will cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* But such earnestness of exclamation is seldom felt by a soul tho' plunging into the abyss of eternity. Thus hundreds, and hundreds go down to the grave, dreadful to think on, with all their crimes about them.

Some, no doubt, like the terrified jailer in the text, are open to a ray of conviction. He had probably been in the early part of his life, a hardened wretch, but was no sooner struck with a sense of his own guilt, than he cried out, *What shall I do to be saved?* He was graciously answered, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. The apostle then explained to him the doctrines of christianity—and shewed him that re-

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penitance and a holy life must follow his faith in Christ. On this he was baptized, we are told, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Here was at least one instance of a sinner reclaimed from destruction. Happy would it be, if to this instance every one of us now present, could in his own thoughts, add another.——I fear it will be much easier to recollect instances of those, who, to all appearance died as they had lived in all the habits of guilt.

Think of these things, my brethren, while time is yet in your hands. Look back upon your past lives; and let every sinner, in the sincerity of his heart cry out like the example of penitence before us, *What shall I do to be saved?* To every one the gospel hath a gracious answer; Repent of your sins--believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, lead a pious life for the future; and thou shalt be saved. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and hath with a most compassionate kindness, assured them, there is joy in heaven over one sinner, that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance---that is, who need not that severe repentance, which the one sinner required.

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One should think that nothing could so effectually convince us of the necessity of doing what we can to be saved, as the consideration of the last great judgment, which awaits us all. He who hath ever seen, in our courts of justice, some wretched criminal tried for his life---when he hath heard the evidence of his guilt brought out so strong against him---and how little he has had to say in his own defence---when he hath seen him stand trembling in expectation of his doom---and finally heard the sentence of death pronounced against him---when he hath seen him led back to his dungeon ; and afterwards heard the convict-bell tolling the hour of his execution---if he has had any feeling about him, he must have been struck with all this dismal solemnity ; and have pitied a fellow creature, tho so deserving of his fate, in an hour of such deep distress.

But what is all this my brethren, to that general judgment, which awaits us at the last day, when we must *all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*---when the grave, and the sea shall give up their dead---when sinners of every kind, and crimes of every name---when thousands, and ten thousands of terrified wretches, shall all be called to one general account. We may imagine the wild

fright

SERMON XI.

LUKE 16. ii.

GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THY STEWARDSHIP; FOR
THOU MAYEST BE NO LONGER STEWARD.

THIS verse is taken from one of our Saviour's parables, in which he introduces the master of a family calling an unjust steward to an account. I shall not however enter into the particular intention of the parable; but confine my discourse to the single circumstance mentioned in the text, *Give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer steward.*—These words I shall consider in an enlarged sense; and shall endeavour to shew you *first*, that we should all consider ourselves in the light of stewards to our
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heavenly master; and *secondly* that we should all act faithfully, as *we must give an account of our stewardships.*

In the first place, we should all consider ourselves in the light of *stewards* to our heavenly master.—A steward is a person appointed to manage affairs, in which he himself has no property; but must give an account of the management of them to the person, who appoints him. In this sense then, according to the scripture account, we are all stewards to God almighty. We have no property, we know, in any of the things we enjoy; but enjoy them merely on the good will, and sufferance of our heavenly master, who expects an account of our several trusts. Let us then see what those things are, which are intrusted to us, and of which we must give an account.

In the first place, we should consider ourselves as stewards of our *time*, not a moment of which is our own. What belongs to God therefore we should use as God directs. Our time is intrusted to us by our great master; and he hath given us directions how to employ it properly in *working out our own salvation*, and in being of service to others. These are the great ends, for which our

time

time is intrusted to us. Like good stewards therefore we should endeavour, in the general employment of our time, that is, when it is not *necessarily* engaged in the matters of this world, to have one or other of these ends in view.

Again, we should consider the *goods of fortune*, as they are called---that is, such possessions, as God hath *given* us, or *enabled* us to procure, in the same light. No man, according to the scripture account, can be said to have a property in any of these things. How can we call any thing our own, of which we may be deprived in a moment? They are all intrusted to us by God; and we are therefore only stewards of them. Some people are rich, and are stewards of large possessions. But even they who have the least, will find themselves much mistaken, if they suppose, they have no trust committed to them. They should remember him, who had only one talent. His great master did not expect from him the improvement of ten talents; but certainly the improvement of one. In short, whether God intrust us with more, or less, is not the question; but whether we are good stewards of what we are intrusted with; and of this God will be the judge;

judge; and we shall be the sufferers, if we are found to have neglected our trusts.

Our *different stations* in life, which furnish us with different means of being of use, are all trusts likewise committed to us as stewards. It is through God's appointment for the benefit of society, that there are different stations in life; to all of which different duties are assigned: and we shall all, no doubt, be called to give an account, how we have acted in these several stations. The magistrate, the clergyman, the lawyer, the merchant, the husbandman, and every one else, has his proper duty, and acts as a steward under God.---Among these trusts that of masters of families is a most important one. The care of servants, and of children is certainly one of the greatest trusts of which we must give an account.

Then again our *reason*, which contributes so much to the government of our lives---which is capable of such use, and abuse, and is the grand distinction between man, and the inferior parts of the creation, ought surely to be considered as a very great trust.

Our *passions* and *appetites* should be considered in the same light. They are all given

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us for useful purposes; tho if neglected, and suffered to run wild, they will lead us into every mischief. We are to consider them therefore as a kind of wastes, of which we are appointed stewards. With care they may be improved to great advantage; but without proper cultivation they will infallibly be overrun with destructive weeds.

We are accountable also for our *health* and *strength*---that is, for the vigour of our bodies, as well as of our minds. If God visit us with sickness, or give us an infirm constitution, we must bear it with resignation, and make the best of it. But if God hath blessed us with health, and strength, we ought to consider these blessings as trusts, and ourselves as the stewards of those trusts, in using them to the best advantage.

Lastly, we should consider ourselves as the stewards of the various *opportunities*, which God is continually throwing in our way of being of service to ourselves, and others. He gives us frequent opportunities of improving ourselves in religion by going to church---by reading the scriptures---by conversing with good people, and profiting by their example. He gives us frequent opportunities also of doing little friendly offices to

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our neighbours. All these opportunities of every kind we should consider as a part of our stewardship, and not as things of course. We should be upon the watch to improve them to advantage.

Thus, in short, every thing we enjoy of every kind, and all the means put into our hands, that can possibly be turned to the advantage either of ourselves, or of others, must be considered as trusts committed to our care: for on all these heads, no doubt, we shall be questioned, when the time comes, that *we shall be no longer stewards; but must give an account of our stewardships.*

Let us then now, my brethren, just suppose that time already come, as it undoubtedly *will* come to every one of us, when *we must be no longer stewards*—when we must all be called before our great master, to *give an account of our stewardships.*—This leads me to the second inquiry I proposed to make from the words of the text.

In the first place then, let us suppose ourselves questioned about the employment of our *time.* Are we all ready with our accounts on this head? We have days, and weeks, and months, and years—numbers of us have many, many years to account for.—What a length of time if we have no

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good to offer!—Alas! it is much to be feared, that numbers of us, setting aside what is *necessarily* spent in the business of the world, have but a very poor account to give. Even the very best of us suffer many a small portion of our time to pass unobserved, and neglected: whereas a man's years are made up of small portions; and if he were to keep an account of the small portions he has wasted, how soon would they amount to years? It is not however in small portions, that people are content to waste their time: how many spend weeks, and months, and years, unmarked by one worthy action. They, who have the most time at their command, are often the most guilty of mispending it. The gospel may remind us, that this world is only a pilgrimage, through which we are to travel to a better---that it is a state of trial to prepare us for heaven--and that our time is given us by God almighty to qualify ourselves for that blessed state.—The gospel may preach all this---it matters not.---Here are our pleasures.---Here are our amusements.---Here are our joys---our comforts---we want no other heaven---and in the purchase and enjoyment of these perishable things, we expend that time, which should have been laid out in purchasing a happy immor-

immortality. Thus we pass merrily through the world, till we are arrested suddenly by an awful voice, *Give an account of thy stewardship: for thou mayest be no longer steward.*

He, who labours for his daily bread, may think himself happy, that he is under less temptation of mispending his *time*, than he, who has most of it at command. But he too, I fear, has often his mispent time to account for---many portions of it, which he might have improved to advantage, and has unhappily neglected.

The happy labourer, he, who spends his time as God approves, after his day of honest labour, makes it his pleasure, as it is his duty, to employ his little leisure in improving himself--in instructing his children--or in making his little home more comfortable to his family. The sabbath he always considers, as God in the beginning appointed it, a day in which the things of this world should give way to the things of the next.—Such a labourer, however poor, is God's faithful servant. Poor as he is, he is happier even in this world, than the richest person in it, who has the load of mispent time, which is a very grievous load, upon his hands; and has in the end his dismal account to give, when he is *put out of his stewardship.*

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Again, let us suppose ourselves questioned about the *worldly possessions* which God hath intrusted to us. How have these been bestowed? For what end, in the first place, does the rich man suppose his riches have been given to him? Has he the pride to imagine, that God hath given him more of the good things of this world, than he hath given to others, for the sake of any real superiority, that he hath over others? or for the sake of any particular kindness which God hath to him? He must be a very *foolish rich man*, if he has any such conceit as this—and he must be a very *thoughtless rich man*, if he do not go a step farther, and conceive, that as God does not give him his wealth for any excellence that he himself possesses, it can be given him only, that he may be a steward of it in the hands of providence, for those, who are in need. If God had made all people equally rich, the business of the world could not have been carried on. But by making one rich, and another poor, God, tho no respecter of persons, provides for the good of all. The rich man should assist the poor man by his wealth; as much as the poor man assists the rich man by his labour.—And does the rich man think, that this being the case, he can innocently spend that wealth on himself—on the follies—

follies—the vanities—and the extravagancies of life—or in hoarding it uselessly up?—It is true, human laws cannot touch him. But we do not pretend to explain human laws in this place. A dreadful time will come, when before a truly awful tribunal, he will be tried by laws of a superior kind than human laws—when he *must be no longer steward, but must give an account of his stewardship.*

Then let him see in what stead it will stand him, to have spent all on himself—on the pleasures, and extravagancies of this wicked world.——Does he want an example to shew, what will be the end of all this perversion of the talents, which God hath intrusted to him? Let him turn to the sixteenth chapter of St. Luke, and there read the account of that rich man, who spent all that he had, on *purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day.* There let him read the end of all such selfish extravagance; and recollect where his unfeeling soul was sent, when he was *put out of his stewardship.*

The poor man indeed hath little of this world's goods intrusted to him; and he may hereafter, when he must give *an account of his stewardship*, think himself happy that he has so little to account for. But there are many degrees, my brethren, between

between the rich and the poor; and all these will be accountable for what they have. And as in the waste of time, there are many little portions, that pass by us unheeded---so in the waste of money, there are many little sums, which the best of us perhaps spend in folly, and which might be brought to a useful account. Let none of us then suppose he hath no account to give. A single talent, wrapped up in a napkin, brought its possessor, you may remember, into a direful case.

We are to give an account also of our *behaviour* in our several stations in life. All these stations have, in some degree, reference to other people, as well as to ourselves: and are trusts reposed in us for the general good. Every man should therefore honestly, and conscientiously perform the duties of his station with a view to the good of others as well as of himself. If the statesman, for instance, peel the public to fill his own coffers---if the physician is attentive to the rich, and not to the poor---if the lawyer promote litigiousness for his own profit---if the clergyman is exact in nothing, but his tythes and dues---if the churchwarden, or overseer contrive to get some little dirty profit out of the parish, by means of his office---or if the farmer keep his corn for an exorbitant price, as

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we have lately seen, when the poor are starving-- All these people betray the trusts, which their several stations in life lay upon them, and will certainly find a severe charge against them, when they must *give an account of their stewardships, and be no longer stewards.*—But above all, *they* will receive a severe punishment, who have families, which they neglect---who leave them to beggary, and any wickedness they may pick up, for the sake of indulging themselves in drunkenness, or some other profligacy; and take no care either to instruct them themselves, or procuring instruction for them from others: and often when they may have instruction merely for being at the pains of receiving it.---The children of the rich are equally neglected, tho in a different way. They are industriously instructed in the accomplishments of this world; while such instruction as relates to the next, is often thought of little value.

In the same way we consider ourselves as stewards of the great gift of *reason*. It was given us to regulate our passions, and appetites, which are placed in subjection to it; and to conduct us religiously, and usefully through the world. But what does he deserve, who changes this order, and

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uses his reason only to gratify his passions, and appetites, instead of governing them? Let him pause a moment, and consider the account he must one day give to God, for the breach of so great a trust. And yet this is the case of all wicked people. They all use their reason in contriving the means of indulging their vices. He who cheats his neighbour, employs his reason, in contriving how he may do it with most advantage. He who has any lewd seducing business in his thoughts, employs his reason in contriving how he may best gratify his passions. And he who is given to liquor, uses his reason only in finding excuses for his drunkenness, or the means of indulging it. All these, and all besides, who use their reason to such wicked purposes, are unfaithful to their trusts; and will be called to a severe account, when *they must be no longer stewards, but must give an account of their stewardships.*

Thus too, if we injure by wicked indulgence, or imprudent conduct of any kind, those great blessings of *health*, and *strength*, we prevent our being of that service in the world, which we otherwise might be; and surely break a very important trust.

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The *opportunities* too, which God hath given us of various kinds, are not *they*, think you, to be accounted for? How often are we called to reflection by the good, or the bad examples of others--by hints in conversation--by our affairs going right or going wrong--by health, or by sickness--and by a variety of other incidents, which are continually falling within the observation of every one.--Above all, are the opportunities we have of religious improvement, think you, given us for nothing? Can we conceive, that God Almighty sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins, and instruct us in a holy religion, without laying upon us a strong obligation to attend to that religion? Can we conceive that we have opportunities, and means given us of reading those scriptures, which our blessed Saviour, and his apostles left behind them for our instruction—that we have an opportunity every week of hearing the word of God explained; and frequent opportunities of renewing the remembrance of our blessed Saviour's death and atonement in a visible rite, which he established for that purpose in the holy sacrament—can we suppose, that we have all these opportunities given us, without supposing, that we are to consider them as trusts, for which we are to

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give an account, *when we are to be no longer stewards?* Depend upon it, it must be given, when all these opportunities, and all these means of God's grace shall be over, and we shall be called on to give an account of our use, or abuse of them.

Having thus, my brethren, shewn you, that we should all consider ourselves as stewards to our heavenly master for every thing we enjoy—and that we should all act faithfully in our several trusts, as we must *give an account of our stewardships*, I shall conclude with pressing upon you the necessity of reducing these truths to practice; which I cannot do better, than in our blessed Saviour's own words. *Who then is that faithful, and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. But if he shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to eat, and drink, and be drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day, when he looketh not for him, and at an hour, when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. There shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.*

SERMON.

S E R M O N XII.

1 TIMOTHY 4. viii.

GODLINESS IS PROFITABLE UNTO ALL THINGS, HAVING THE PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS, AND OF THAT WHICH IS TO COME.

THE godliness depends chiefly on the promise of the life, *that is to come*, yet as we are told it hath the promise also of the life, *that now is*, it seems right for the ministers of the gospel to explain this, and every advantage, that attends it. Indeed it is, in fact, strengthening the force of religion to give it the promise of the life, *that now is*; for as there must be a uniformity in all God's works, it is a strong presumption, that if a religious conduct tends to make us happy *here*, it will

will tend still more to make us happy hereafter.

In considering this subject, I shall shew you *first*, that religion tends more than wickedness to procure us the enjoyment of life. *Secondly*, that it gives us a better relish for them. *Thirdly*, that it is a greater security against misfortunes: and *lastly*, that when we do fall into misfortunes, it is our best support under them.

In the first place, religion tends more than vice to procure us the enjoyments of life.—But here I would not be understood to mean that a religious life has a greater tendency than a wicked one, to procure us sudden, or exorbitant wealth. By acts of oppression, or fraud, a man may create a fortune at once; as a thief may suddenly enrich himself by breaking open a house.—But he, who is inclined to enrich himself by rapine, and robbery, will never listen to any discourse of this kind. He is beyond the pale of instruction. When I speak therefore of the worldly advantages of religion, I confine them merely to those who are content to go on innocently in the *common course of business*, in which certainly a virtuous conduct has a greater tendency to success, than a vicious one.

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And first prudence, which we surely esteem a virtue, is most essential in conducting our affairs. This is so certain, that wherever you see an imprudent man, there also you see a man in difficulties. The wicked man sometimes acts prudently, and so far he acts properly: but when he acts in *character*, his measures are concerted by art, and cunning. These serve but a present occasion: prudence is ever of use.

Then again industry, temperance, and frugality, which are all virtues, have the same good tendency. Did any of you ever see an idle, drunken, extravagant fellow prosper in his business, or live comfortably? I believe not.—His business fails—or his friends forsake him—or his quarrelsome temper leads him into mischief—or something happens, which he might have avoided, if he had been quiet, sober, and industrious.

Honesty too has the same good tendency. The knave must pretend to be honest, or he can never succeed. If he be supposed to be a knave, nobody will trust him. And it will be a very difficult matter for him to manage so, as not to be found out. There is the same difference between a really honest man, and a disguised knave, as between a piece of fair gold coin, and a gilt counterfeit. The honest Guinea shews its face any where.

Weigh

S E R M O N XII.

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Weigh it: it does not want a grain. Bring it to the touchstone; it stands the proof. Carry it to market: every body likes to deal with it. But it is not so with the counterfeit. Bring it to the scale or the touchstone: it is discovered at once. And if it should escape so nice an enquiry, yet in its common intercourse of business, the gilding wears off in spots—the base metal here and there appears—and in the end, it will not pass for a single farthing.—Look therefore into your own hearts, and take care that no dishonesty may appear in them—that the gilding may not begin to wear off in spots. We are generally the last people ourselves to know we are suspected. If the knave should hear all the secret whispers of his neighbours against him, he would perhaps wonder how they came to know his heart so well.

Another thing, which contributes to make the religious man more successful in business, is the assistance of others. His goodness naturally procures it. The more friends a man has, the fairer is his chance for success. In whatever way of life he is engaged, so many difficulties arise, (especially in the early part of life, before he is established in the world) that without the friendly assistance of others; he could not proceed with any success.

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Now those pleasing qualities, which religion inspires, tend naturally to procure a man that assistance. His obliging behaviour—the general kindness of his temper—and the goodness of his heart, gain him new friends, while his gratitude preserves his old ones.—Thus it appears that religion hath a greater natural tendency than vice, to procure us the enjoyments of life.—As we cannot however suppose, that all the conciliating qualities here mentioned, can meet in every person, who on the whole may be denominated religious, I shall only add, that *he* will have the best chance for success, in whom the *most* of them are found.

I shall now shew you, *secondly*, that when the enjoyments of life are procured, religion gives us the best relish for them. Here there can be no competition. The bad man, we just observed, may make a larger fortune; but he cannot possibly enjoy it with equal comfort. The enjoyments of the world in their greatest perfection, cannot give us compleat happiness. A certain degree of it is the utmost they can give. Now the religious man knows this, and expects nothing more from the world. But this is not the case of the worldly man. He expects his full happiness from it; and when

when it gives less than he expects, the deficiency, which is always enough, is disappointment, and vexation.—Then again we can hardly conceive his conscience laid so entirely asleep, as not to haunt him for many of his actions. The dread of discovery too must give him some uneasiness: and these are certainly drawbacks from the enjoyments of the world.

Again, the worldly man placing all his happiness in the things of this world, has no resources when they are gone. As they contribute to make our passage through life more comfortable, we ought to be highly thankful to God for them: but they are surely a very scanty provision for the whole of our being. How far the worldly man acts prudently in leaving his soul out of the account, and considering his worldly possessions as his all, we must leave him to determine. This however is an undoubted truth, that the more his worldly possessions engross him, the more disturbed he will be at the idea of parting with them. He has nothing left. Few men, I suppose, would be perfectly easy, if all they had, depended on a suit at law, which they had every reason to fear would go against them. Now this is exactly the case of the man, who puts his trust in the things of this world. Does he not know, there

there is a great fruit depending, which will undoubtedly, sooner, or later, dispossess him of all he has? Can any lawsuit turn him more effectually out of his estate, than death?—But the religious man is under no such apprehension. He is prepared for the fruit's going against him; because the bulk of his fortune is still left. He has a treasure elsewhere, *which faileth not*.—In short, he considers the things of this world only as a provision for a journey. When that is over, he has no farther occasion for them.

But as this world not only affords us many comforts; but abounds also with *misfortunes*, I am next to shew you, that against these also a religious life is our best security.—Many misfortunes, no doubt, as sickness, for instance, the death of friends, or inclement seasons, can, by no care of ours, be prevented. But tho the religious man cannot prevent them, he will always be the best able to bear them.—The chief distresses however to which mankind are liable, come from mankind themselves; and against these we shall find a religious life our best security. Generally speaking, we draw upon ourselves the mischievous behaviour of mankind. If our own passions were in better order

order we should suffer less from the passions of others. *An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,* is a jewish law well understood by the generality of christians. One malicious action, or spiteful expression, draws on another, and so the injury spreads. Whereas, on the other hand, as the apostle argues, *who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* If you keep a prudent care over your own conduct with regard to others, you will generally draw the same behaviour from them. David long ago observed, that the *meek-spirited should possess the earth, and delight himself in the abundance of peace.*

But altho the most innocent behaviour may not be a sufficient guard, against the mischief arising from bad men; yet against those misfortunes, which we *bring upon ourselves*, a religious conduct is a sure defence. It corrects all those vices, which dissipate our fortunes—ruin our characters—and bring on premature disease. But on this subject, I have already touched.* I shall proceed therefore to what I proposed *lastly* to consider, that when misfortunes do befall us, religion is our best support under them.

For, in the first place, it is the happiness of the reli-

* See Page 146.

religious man to be prepared for all circumstances of life. He can suffer as well as act. *He hath learned, in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. He knows, both how to be abased, and how to abound—every where, and in all things he is instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry—both to abound, and to suffer need.*—But these are lessons, which the wicked man hath never learned.

The lessons he learns, are not taken from his bible; but from the world. From this instructor, he never hears a syllable about contentment: but is always pushed on in quest of something more than he possesses. Peace and quietness are strangers to him.

The religious man again considers misfortunes, as the necessary appendages of a state of trial; and knows, that if he make a proper use of them, they are God's gracious means of trying his sincerity; of weaning him from the world; and of purifying his affections.—But the wicked man acknowledges them in no useful light. He bears them because he *must*: and by his impatience, and irreligious fretfulness, generally makes every misfortune many times greater, than it really is.

But among the great supports of the religious man under the pressure of misfortune, is his inter-

tercourse with God. Every prayer he sends up, unburdens his soul, and lightens his affliction. Before God therefore he pours out his complaints, *casting all his care upon him, knowing that he careth for him.*—His almighty father, he knows, has the power to relieve him in the most desperate circumstances---and always the will to do it, when relief is proper.—But the wicked man hath no such consolation. Lost to all hope of comfort from the world in his distresses, he has no room to expect it from God. With what face can he cry, *Lord have mercy upon me*, when he perhaps never acknowledged the mercy of God in his life?

The last consolation I shall mention of the religious man, arises at the close of life, from the expectation of a future state. In the merits of that blessed Redeemer he trusts, whose laws he has endeavoured to keep, and whose merciful atonement, he humbly hopes, will graciously supply his deficiencies.—But the wicked man meets a death-bed without any consolation. His crimes, like evil spirits, hover over him. He wishes to shun danger, but how? He looks round him, but the world he worshipped, affords him not a single hope. He looks *within*:—his terrified imagina-

tion drives him presently back. His breast heaves with a tumult of distress; and his dying hour closes upon him like the gloom of a stormy night.

—Whereas in the next world only the religious man rests. His faith and hope carry him into regions of happiness. His eye looks beyond the trifling accidents of life into the glories of eternity. His great interest, he knows, lies not here, but there. He sees, like the dying martyr, *heaven opened, and Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, is a prayer, which in spite of bodily pain—in spite of all the weaknesses of decaying nature, awakens transport through all his feelings.

Having thus, my brethren, endeavoured to prove the truth of the text, that godliness hath the promise of the *life that now is*, I shall just observe farther—that as God's great provision of happiness for his rational creatures, is a future world, we should be very careful not to mistake the *means* for the *end*. If we conceive this world to be a *state* of happiness, we invert that divine order, which intends it only as the *means* of happiness. We should be very cautious therefore how

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we suffer the ideas of *happiness*, and the *world*, to enter our minds together. In our most joyous hours we should be most on our guard; and never allow ourselves in the happiest moments of this world to lose sight of the next.—And yet it should be matter of great thankfulness, that God hath made our state of trial so happy as it is; and that he hath put it so much in our own power, to increase its comforts, and lessen its distresses.

Let us then consider this world in the gracious light in which God intends. Let us not in our thankfulness overrate the blessings it holds out; nor be too much depressed by its misfortunes: but let us consider them both, as the scale, by which we ascend to future happiness.

In few words, we may make this world a very comfortable place, if we please; and conclude it with everlasting happiness.—On the other hand, if we abuse God's blessings, we may turn it into a state of great unhappiness; and in the end, into the means of future misery. We may take our option of these two ways of possessing the world; and may God almighty assist us in the direction of our choice!

S E R M O N XIII.

PSALM 119, LXXI.

IT IS GOOD FOR ME, THAT I HAVE BEEN IN
TROUBLE.

THIS was David's opinion of trouble; with which he had been exercised in various shapes: and if he thought it good for *himself*, no doubt, he thought it good for *every body else*. Let us then consider it as a truth confirmed by the experience of this wise and pious prince, that it is good *for us all* to be in trouble; and as such let me endeavour to explain it.

The truth of the observation is founded on the nature of our situation in this world; which is intended, we know, as a state of trial, to prepare us for

for a better state.——Now a state of trial must be conducted by a due mixture of happiness and trouble. Both these are the sources of many virtues, and many vices, which could not be derived from either alone. However as David in the text, speaks only of the *troubled* part of a state of trial, we will at present leave out the comfortable part; and see only what good arises from our *being in trouble*. Indeed the chief good arises, as far as we ourselves are concerned, from the troubled part. Let us then examine what that good is, which arises from it.

In the first place it tends to open, and explain to us, (what few consider sufficiently) the nature of our situation in this world. If we are ignorant of that, it is impossible we can act right. Life is converted into a dream; and fancy presides, instead of reason. If a man living in a cottage, should behave as if he lived in a palace—if he should order his servants about him—command his table to be filled with the most costly food—and call for the richest apparel; what would his neighbours, who saw things in their true light, say of him? The least they could say of him, would be, that he ran into all those extravagancies from being ignorant

rant of his proper station; and from his supposing he had a command of happiness, which he really had not. Now if you put the world for the cottage, and the generality of mankind for the peasant, who inhabits it, and see them every where craving after degrees of happiness, which belong not to their station, you see every absurdity of the case I have just represented—you see the abundance, and superfluities of the palace expected in the cottage.

But an acquaintance with the nature of our situation here, corrects all this. We find the world is by no means meant for a state of happiness;—but that it has its sorrows, as well as joys. In our happiest moments therefore, we should never lose sight of those evils, which we know will befall us, in some part of our passage through life. This preserves us from tumultuous joy; and gives us temperance in our pleasures: it draws us frequently back to the situation in which we stand: it shews us where we are and what we are; and in short, if we have the piety of christians about us, it inculcates strongly the ideas of a state of trial.

Being possessed practically of this great truth—that the world is not to be considered as a state of happiness, but as a state of trial, let us next see that

that it is *good for us to be in trouble* for the improvement both of our *tempers*, and our *hearts*. We are trained under the hand of our Almighty Father, as children are under their earthly one. If we were indulged in every thing our foolish hearts are set on, like humoured and petted children, we should not know what we wanted. A second wisdom would arise before the first was gratified. Ill-humours and follies would be continually breaking out, and distressing, both ourselves and others. All this our heavenly Father corrects by affliction; and if we are obedient children, we profit under his correcting hand. If indeed we have lived long in a course of prosperity, affliction at first may not have its proper effect. But in this case the medicine is either working by degrees on the malady -- or the dose has not yet been sufficiently strong. A repetition of it will bring us to ourselves. Our *tempers* will become softened; and we shall see, that the things of this world, which have engaged our regard, are unworthy of it. Of course, the little vexations, and disappointments we meet with, on the account of these things, affect us little; and our *tempers* will become more composed, the less value we place on the trifles, that formerly discomposed them.

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As the *temper* is improved by affliction, so is the *heart*. Our wrong dispositions are corrected by it. The case is, the love of the world is the great foundation of a *bad disposition*, as well as of a *bad temper* ; and a little affliction hath a natural tendency to correct one, as well as the other.—Pride, for instance, arises only from the thoughts of our being superior to others. But a little affliction tends to dispossess a well-ordered mind of these conceits. It makes us look into ourselves ; it shews us what poor, helpless creatures we are, and pride falls of course.—What again is revenge, but a vile passion raised against one, or other, for interfering in some of our worldly views ? Give the world less consequence, which affliction effectually does, and in proportion you destroy the passion.—Thus again envy is always raised on some worldly foundation. You hate a man for rising above you, and wish to bring him down to your own level. If a little affliction lessen your interest in the world, you are careless about your rival, and of course your envy subsides. ---And thus of all other bad propensities.

Now all this is evident from considering the case of a dying man. He must be a very hardened wretch indeed, (tho some such wretches there

there are) whose mind in that awful hour, is not free from pride, anger, envy, and other bad passions. Why ^{is} he free from them? Why because the world, and he are parting. He has done with it. All his concern for it is over.---Now this deadness to the world is the very state, which the gospel enjoins to all christians: and as afflictions bring us to this state by purifying our minds from worldly passions, we must conclude, if we think justly, that it is *good for us to have been in trouble.*

Again, it is good for us, to have *been in trouble*, as we are members of society. Every man, in a course of prosperity, is inclined to pay too little attention to the necessities of his indigent neighbours. A good man, no doubt, will in part be concerned for all human affliction: but still prosperity leading him continually to enjoyment, gives him a turn for gaiety and mirth, which naturally love to shut out disagreeable objects. It is adversity, which unlocks the tender feelings of the heart. It brings the two states of high and low—of adversity, and prosperity, more on a level. It gives the rich man a lesson from a sense of *feeling*, which perhaps he could not so well learn from a sense of *duty*. It makes him enter more into

the distresses of others, from knowing what their distresses *really* are.

Besides, if we bear afflictions as we ought, we cannot do those about us a greater service, than by our example. When we see a man bear *profperity* properly, we have a very pleasing sight; yet still the invidious sarcasm of old will be thrown out, *He doth not serve God for nought*. But the example of *suffering* piety is indeed a lesson of instructions—a lesson, which we all ought to learn whenever we have opportunity, as at one time we shall all have occasion to use it. Hence the sufferings of holy martyrs, and other pious men, who have borne God's afflicting hand with christian resignation, are among the most useful records of history. They do the highest honour to religion; and place its blessed consolations in the most splendid point of light.

Thus our being in trouble has a tendency to amend our tempers—to improve our hearts—to make us more compassionate, and friendly to our neighbours—and more exemplary in society. But there is still one point more, on which I must insist, and which is of more consequence than all the rest; and that is the tendency of affliction to raise

raise in our minds a thorough sense of religion, and dependence on God.

Shew me the man, who hath experienced, for any time, a course of prosperity, without feeling that 't hath a bad tendency on his mind--that it makes him negligent of his religious duties, and leads him more or less to a state of independence? When all things go prosperously with us, it is difficult not to forget ourselves. It must be a strong mind, which can bear a constant course of prosperity. *Take thine ease---eat---drink---and be merry*, is the natural language of these joyous seasons of our lives. In general, when the world smiles, we smile with it; and are all too apt to expect our happiness rather from its smiles, than from our trust and hope in the promises of the gospel.----How happy is it therefore for us, in the midst of all this delusion, if we thought justly, to be brought back again to our senses by a little trouble. This breaks the charm. We find we are not so independent, as we suffered ourselves foolishly to conceive. We acknowledge there is one above, who orders all events---that if we do not take him into the account, we neglect the only medicine that can reach our malady---and that if we do take him into the account, we are armed against every

every event. We are under the government of that gracious Being, who unerringly knows what is best for us. *No chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous: nevertheless it afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them, who are exercised thereby.* God's holy servant is exercised thereby. As his mind becomes more composed, he is more, and more convinced of the advantages of affliction and that it is the great means of religious improvement. He looks round him, and sees the various disappointments, which mankind are continually receiving from the world. He looks into himself, and *experiences* what he sees. Can the largest possessions allay the anguish, which now lies heavy upon him? Can they bring back the friend of his heart, whom he hath just lost? or can they mitigate those acute pains, which shoot through his body? He raises his eye to heaven for better support. As the world lessens; his trust in God, and in the merits of a Redeemer increase; and he finds a relief in prayer, which he never felt in his prosperous days. Thus, like the holy psalmist, when *his heart is in heaviness, he thinks upon God.* Having found that nothing in this world can allay his heaviness, he lifts up his heart to that God, who will never leave him in his distress; but has assured him,

him, that if even *his father, and mother should forsake him, he would lift him up*. Gracious God, he cries, support thy unworthy servant in this time of trial! Let not the least murmur escape my lips! nor any sentiment, but of the deepest resignation enter my heart! Let me make the use thou intendest of that affliction thou hast laid upon me! It has convinced me of the vanity, and emptiness of all things here; let it draw me to thee as my only support; and fill my heart with pious trust in thee, and in the blessings of a redeeming Saviour, as the only real consolations of a state of trial.

This, my brethren, is the great point, we should all aim at. When affliction has done this for us--when it hath brought us to this frame of mind, it hath attained its end. And this is the effect, one should hope, it will always have on a *well-disposed mind*. But still even the well-disposed mind must always endeavour to preserve a sense of those holy sentiments, which affliction raised. If we make no future use of the lessons we have learned from affliction, we lose half their effect. Those medicines are often among the most useful, which correct our bad humours, and establish our future health. Without these, the cure of the first disease would

signify little. Every untoward symptom might immediately revive. Those feelings therefore, and those sentiments, which arose in our minds, when we were afflicted, should be the ruling thoughts of our hearts, if God should raise us again to health, or restore us to that state of enjoyment, whatever it was, of which we had been deprived. The world is continually creeping in, and insinuating itself into all its old haunts. The channels, in which pleasure, avarice, or ambition used to run, are easily again opened, unless carefully closed.—But we must always remember, that the almighty physician, who administered the remedy, must ever be applied to for the continuance of its success. Unless we preserve a communion with him by constant prayer, for the assistance of his holy spirit, we are in constant danger of a relapse. Our own powers cannot cope with the subtilities of the world.

Thus exercised by *affliction*, the faithful servant of the Lord, makes it the means of correcting *prosperity*, the other appendage of a state of trial. When he is in affliction, religious sentiments *force themselves* upon him. When the world smiles, he *calls* them to his assistance. He does not *ensnaring* smiles with caution. He does not refuse

refuse to take a part in the innocent amusements of the world: but he always suspects them like enemies in disguise. He knows that worldly happiness is God's mode of trying his sincerity; and bringing it to proof. It is now therefore that he fortifies his mind with all those religious sentiments, which affliction had raised. The vanity of the world---his own dependent state---the blessings of redemption---and the mercies of God, were then the principal subjects of his thoughts: and amidst all the cares, and vanities of life, he now endeavours to keep them in sight. The wrongnesses of his temper also, and the bad propensities of his heart, which were all corrected by affliction, he still, in the hour of happiness, endeavours to correct by the recollection of what he formerly felt.

Thus, amidst all the excesses of the world, he passes through his state of trial--innocent---holy--and devoted to God, with whom he has constant intercourse by prayer---ever acknowledging, both in sickness, and in health, among God's other instances of kindness to him, his fatherly correcting hand---evermore crying out, *It is good for me that I have been in trouble, for now have I learned thy law.*

SERMON XIV.

PSALM 94. XIX.

IN THE MULTITUDE OF SORROWS, WHICH I HAD
IN MY HEART, THY MERCIES HAVE REFRESHED
MY SOUL.

THIS psalm is supposed to have been written
by David; who tho a great king, had felt
as *many sorrows in his heart* as most men. Sor-
row, you see then belongs to all stations of life.
We are assured in scripture, that all mankind are
born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. If the
poor feel distresses from having too little; the rich
feel them as often, and perhaps more keenly, from
having too much. Abundance creates unsatisfied
desires; and unsatisfied desires produce painful
disappoint-

disappointments. Where there are great possessions, there will be frequent losses. While the poor are more moderate in their desires; and having little, have the less to lose. Diseases are incident to us all; and if we live into old age, infirmities, and disorders, stare us in the face; the certain signals of our approaching dissolution.---From all these causes such a variety of evils flow in upon us, that there is no man living who does not occasionally feel *a multitude of sorrows in his heart.*

As we are all therefore, more or less, the children of sorrow, it is a great happiness to have something, as the psalmist says, to *refresh our souls.*---For tho' our sorrow makes a part of our state of trial; and is of great service to us, as I endeavour'd to shew you in a late discourse; yet still our heavenly father allows us to take every proper means of mitigating it. I shall recommend to you therefore the holy psalmist's example on this occasion; and shew you, how you may *refresh your souls, in the multitude of your sorrows*; as he advises you, by the *mercies of God.*

The worldly man indeed hath no dependence on these mercies. He acts, as if this world was his only source of consolation. He finds all his comforts in it; and has no idea of any happiness, but what

what it provides. And no doubt there are great comforts in this world ; and the grateful man will always thank his heavenly father for them. But if God provide us still better comforts, we are surely very improvident, if we do not take them also into the account. Tho' our earthly comforts are good in their kind ; it is surely too much to consider them as fully sufficient to make us happy even in this world. They are in the first place, attended with uneasiness, and disappointment ; something unpossessed, which seldom makes them what we expected. Then again the possession of them is insecure. Some unforeseen accident may arise, which depriving us of one possession after another, may, in the end, leave us nothing to *refresh our souls*.—But if the good things of this world could be *secured* to us even till death ; what then? Do we look for nothing farther? We cannot take the comforts of this world, out of the world with us ; and as we have souls to be provided for, we see, without some comforts of a spiritual kind, there will be a great want of *provision still*.—

Let us then, examine with holy David, what *the mercies of God* will do for us : let us see what these mercies are—what spiritual comforts they will af-

ford us in our distresses—or in David's words what *refreshment* they will give *our souls*.

The first mercy then which we receive from God almighty, is our *creation*—the plain, simple fact, that God made us.—Now, in what way should this mercy, *in the multitude of our sorrows, refresh our souls?*—Why thus. Can you conceive that God almighty would call you into being—create so many things around you for your use—and then throw you aside, and take no farther notice of you? Can you conceive, that he would create a thing, without any farther design, than merely to create it; and then dismiss all concern about it? It is impious to believe it.—You have the comfort therefore of supposing, that one mercy will insure another. So that in all your sorrows, you may take it for granted, that, that God, who created you, has you still in his eye--that he will still take care of you--that whatever distresses are laid upon you, are meant for your good--and that he will never forsake *you*, if you never forsake *him*.

This comfort is farther insured by your preservation. Your continual preservation is a mercy, which comes still nearer home. You experience it

it every time you draw your breath. *In him you live, and move, and have your being. If he taketh away your breath, you die, and are turned again to your dust. Not a sparrow, you read falleth to the ground without God's permission. Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* If then God continually preserves you, you are assured, that every thing that befalls you happens through him; and have a still farther consolation, that all your afflictions are of his sending—unless indeed you draw them upon yourselves by your own vices, and follies; then indeed the case is different; and you must thank yourselves for the mischief—but if your afflictions are of God's sending, your continual preservation gives you new ground for believing, they must be right.—How ought you then, *in the multitude of your sorrows to refresh your souls with this mercy?* You are not only under the general government of God, as a part of his creation; but, you see, every one of you is under his *particular* care.

This consolation is still farther enforced by many instances of God's goodness, which most of you have experienced *peculiar to yourselves.* Some of you through his mercy have escaped dangers,

gers, which you could not have escaped by any human means. Others perhaps have recovered your health, when you were at the very brink of the grave. And others, in the midst of poverty, have received some unexpected supply, some unlooked-for restoration, which could only be attributed to the mercy of God. All of you may probably remember something of this kind: and every such particular instance of God's mercy is an argument addressed directly to your own feelings; and ought in a peculiar manner to *refresh your souls*. These immediate instances of God's favour, must convince (they *speak within you*) that you, and your concerns, how mean soever the proud world may think them, are in the hands of God. He is no respecter of persons. He does not consider things as mean and great, as they are considered upon earth. *His eyes are over the righteous*, however mean, *and his ears open to their prayers*. The poor, unhappy Lazarus, under all his afflictions in this world, was more, you know, the favourite of God, than the proud, hard-hearted Dives, with all his *purple, and fine linen, and sumptuous fare*.

But the greatest of all the mercies of God, which in the multitude of our sorrows should *refresh our souls*

souls, is the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ. This is such an instance of God's mercy to man, as cannot but convince us, we are under his particular care. When we consider, that the son of God took our nature upon him, and died for our sins, we must either believe that we are under the merciful care of God—or, we must totally disbelieve the gospel. There is no middle way. We may take our choice: but if we believe one, we must believe the other: for as the apostle forcibly argues, *if God gave us his son, how much more will he not with him give us all things?*

Besides, it is not among the least mercies of the gospel, that it places things before us in their true light; and shews us the very reason, why God often afflicts us. It is to draw us from the world to himself; and fit us for heaven by passing through a state of trial.—At the same time, the gospel, ever gracious, provides us with proper comforts under all our sorrows.

Are you poor? Yet bear your lot with patience. You read, that God hath chosen the poor of this world—that is, such poor, as bear their lot with meek resignation to his will; and thus turn *poverty* into *religion*. They are Christ's servants, and

and he will reward them, when all the glories of this world fade away.---Bear then your lot with patience.

Are you reduced from better days?---This is still a harder case, than living constantly in poverty; and having known no better. But what matters it? Tho you have lost your possessions here, you may provide for yourselves *a treasure elsewhere, that faileth not.*

Have you lost some dear friend, or relation? A few natural tears will fall: but still religion hath its balm for this grief also. Your friend hath joined, we hope, the spirits of *just men made perfect*: which in due time, you also may expect to join. *Why should you then sorrow, the apostle asks, as others, which have no hope? For if you believe, that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.*

Have you been evil-spoken of, and your character injured? When you know yourself innocent, this is hard to bear on worldly principles. But religion makes even calumny light. All will be set right hereafter. Tho your name is injured upon earth, it may be written in the *book of life*; and your innocence made clear before angels, and men.

Lastly,

Lastly, is your health declining, your body worn down with age or sickness?—It is well. You are hastening apace to your great home, where sickness, and distress shall be no more. Listen to the great apostle, *declaring his desire to depart, and be with Christ*, if it were God's blessed will; and endeavour to raise your desires to the same elevated degree. You are hastening to a father's house, where, if you have been an obedient son, you shall surely receive a joyful welcome.

Since then, it may be said, we have such excellent means of comfort in all our distresses, one should think, that nobody need be miserable. How is it, notwithstanding all these comforts, that might *refresh our souls*, how is it, that we see men, every where, wretched, and repining---fretted at each little accident of life---discontented---perhaps cast down, and forlorn.

Whence is it, do you ask? I'll tell you, my friends. It is because we try every method of obtaining comfort, but the true one. The comforts of religion are promised to you, if you chuse to accept them: but you must remember, they are promised to you only on a supposition, that you are really religious. If you are luke-warm in your

your profession--and depend rather on the comforts of the world, you surely so far give up the comforts of religion! If you refuse the medicine, you cannot expect the cure. If you have trusted in the world for your happiness; why, you must go to the world for your comfort also. *In the multitude of sorrows, that are in your heart*, there you must apply for relief. When the calamities of life bear hard upon you---when sickness, or the infirmities of age, overtake you, you must try what consolations the world can give---what comforts *it* has in store for its devoted servants.--- To the consolations of the gospel you have little claim.---What?---Can you expect the pleasures of sin; and the comforts of religion?---Can you receive, at the same time, think you, the wages of Mammon, and the wages of Jesus Christ? Ah! my friends, you will find yourselves miserably mistaken;---cruelly disappointed. The world is a poor comforter in affliction---a wretched paymaster to those who trust it.

If then you desire to receive solid comfort in *affliction*, the way is plain before you: you must look for it only in religion. You must obey the gospel. You must receive through faith, Christ's law into your heart. You must leave off your

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sins. You must believe truly in God through Christ. You must resign yourself with humility into his hands; and leaving the world out of the question, you must fix your thoughts on the promises of the gospel. Act thus, and then you may hope for the comforts of religion in your afflictions. Then you shall feel it more than the empty boast of religion, that *in the multitude of sorrows, which you have in your heart, the mercies of God will indeed refresh your soul.*

SERMON XX.

MATTHEW 10. XXX.

THE VERY HAIRS OF YOUR HEAD ARE ALL NUMBERED.

IN the chapter, from whence this verse is taken, our blessed Saviour instructs his apostles, before he sends them to preach the gospel. He enumerates the many difficulties, they should meet with from bad men, and from the perverseness of the world in general. But he assures them for their comfort, that none of these events were properly in the hands of men; but were under the direction of providence;—of that providence, whose care extended to the smallest events of the creation. The very hairs of *their heads*, he tells them, are

are all numbered.—As the providence of God no doubt, acts at all times in the same uniform manner, the instruction of the text belongs to us, as much as to those, to whom it was originally given; I shall therefore in the following discourse, endeavour to explain to you, first what we understand by the *providence of God*; and secondly I shall shew you, what effect this doctrine should have upon us.

When we speak of the *providence* of God, we do not inquire into his *being*. That is taken for granted.—Neither is God's creating the world the subject of our enquiry; but only his government of it; which is what we strictly mean by his *providence*.

Now the belief of God's providence, or government of the world, engages us in greater difficulties, than the belief merely of his creating it: and it must needs be so. That God *created* the world, every one, who hath eyes to see must be convinced.—But to believe he *governs* it, requires the use of our reason, as well as of our sight. We must reason from what we know to what we do not know: for it is evident, that the acutest human reason cannot understand the whole mode of God's moral government.

W hen

When you see a watch, you are convinced at the sight of so curious a piece of workmanship that it was made by some ingenious artist, tho if you are not skilled in watchmaking, you cannot possibly understand the use of all the springs, and wheels; nor comprehend how its motion is regularly carried on. At the same time, it would be absurd to doubt; whether the watch received its motion from the same ingenious hands that made it?—Thus when we see the various parts of this world move in so regular a manner—when we see the spring uniformly succeed the winter—when we see the summer follow the spring, and make proper preparation for autumn—and winter, as it were, resting from the labours of the year; and preparing for a new course of vegetation—when we see the world, thus admirably conducted in itself, and at the same time furnished not only with an infinite variety of animals, but each of these animals exactly suited to the element it lives in; and furnished with the proper means of providing food, and shelter, and other necessities, we cannot but allow, if we have any modesty, that every difficulty we meet with, must be owing to ourselves: tho we cannot comprehend with our

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confined understandings, the whole mode of God's government.

Thus far however the light of nature might go. God's *general government* of the world was denied by few even among the heathen. Our present question with regard to his *particular providence* was left more at large. It was not easily conceived, that so great a Being, could trouble himself with such trifling affairs, as those of this world.

Revelation however opens this matter to us very clearly. The jews were well informed by their prophets, that the providence of God extended to every part of his creation; that the deity is ever present to the minutest affairs of man; that he is *about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways.* The gospel carries on the same idea; informing us, that the most insignificant parts of nature are under the inspection of God; that not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge; and that the *very hairs of our head are all numbered.* From such strong expressions we collect, that the *whole world*, and every part of it, are under the immediate government of God; that nothing is left to chance; that God over-rules every thing; and that even the minutest circumstances are directed by him.

As man indeed is placed in a state of trial, which he may either turn to his happiness, or misery, his actions must of course, be left free; and he may be said, in some respects to govern himself: but even the will of man may be assisted by God, if man will condescend to ask his assistance,---But this enquiry belongs to another question.

As every doctrine of scripture is intended for our use, let us now see, as I proposed *secondly*, what uses we should draw from the doctrine of the over-ruling *providence of God*.

The first obvious instruction is, that we should all be content with our several stations in life. This is a lesson, which should be often repeated; as it is a lesson very hard to learn. The doctrine of the providence of God inculcates it strongly. If a soldier placed in the ranks, should be discontented, and troublesome, because he was not an officer, his behaviour would be treated, and punished as mutinous. What then is our behaviour to our great Lord, and master, if we are discontented with the posts, which he hath assigned us?—We are exactly those soldiers, who are mutinous, because we are placed in the ranks: only we are so much worse, as we have an unerring commander. If

it please God, he can throw such opportunities in our way, as will naturally raise us to higher stations. In the mean time let us shew ourselves worthy of such advancement, by acting properly in those stations, in which we are placed. Even envying those, who are placed before us, or murmuring in any shape, against what God pleases to lay on us, is mutiny against him.

Another great use arising from this doctrine, is the regulation of the passions of *hope*, and *fear*. I speak not of these passions, as they relate to future happiness; but merely as they concern us in this world. Their influence indeed is so great over the hearts of men, and they domineer with so much tyranny, that we should all endeavour to hold them in perfect subjection. When they have their proper objects, they are useful aids to reason: but when they are misled by the wild influence of imagination, there is no mischief, into which they may not lead us. Of unhappiness they are the constant source. Our unreasonable hopes occasion keen disappointments; and our unreasonable fears, as keen distress. Indeed the happiness, which one man possesses in equal circumstances, over another, consists chiefly in the proper management of these headstrong passions.

Now

Now there is nothing so well calculated to govern our *hopes*, and *fears*; and keep the mind in a firm, steady situation, as a belief of the *particular providence* of God. As all the events of nature are in his hands—as it is as easy for him to save, as to destroy; and by means totally unlooked for, the man who reposes his confidence in providence, is moderate in all his expectations, because he knows events are not ordered according to his wishes; but according to the will of providence. Again, he is firm in all dangers, because he relies on the direction of that powerful arm, that can still the *raging of the sea*—turn *aside the fierceness of an enemy*—*check the pestilence*, that walketh in *darkness*, and the *arrow*, that destroyeth at noon-day. All this is every day experienced in the history of mankind. How often do we see the hopes of men in a moment dispersed, when they were on the point of being completed?—How often do we see such strange, and sudden escapes from danger, that we can only attribute them to the immediate hand of God? When our cause therefore is good, we should not if possible, give way to fear; but should trust in that power, with whom nothing is impossible. David had learned this lesson from experience. Nobody had been in more dangers.

as it is said

But

But a consciousness of the divine providence, raised him above all fear; and gave him such intrepidity, that in the greatest dangers he could cry out, *Therefore will I not fear, tho the earth be moved, tho the hills be carried into the midst of the sea, tho the waters thereof rage, and swell; and tho the mountains shake at the tempest of the same.* All this is rational: it is religion: it is christianity.

Some people ground their intrepidity on a different principle. They believe, that all events are directed by what they call *fatæ*:—a blind principle which they cannot explain. This is directly contrary to the religious principle I am endeavouring to inculcate, and is indeed a very irreligious one. By a particular providence we mean, that events are so far from being *fatæ*, that they are all controlled, over-ruled, and governed, as the all-wise governor sees best. In all cases therefore tho our own prudence and best endeavours, must co-operate, we must leave the event of all things with confidence in the hands of God.

Another use arising from the doctrine of a particular providence, is to check all thoughts of vanity, self-conceit, and self-importance, and to impress ourselves with that almost greatest of all

christian virtues—humility. On nothing does our blessed Saviour lay a greater stress: as it is the foundation of almost all other virtues. How naturally, therefore is this impressed, when we consider ourselves only as instruments in the hands of providence. Our stations, our abilities, our wealth, whatever we possess, are not given us for any reward due to us—nor for any worth that we possess; but merely to fulfil the purposes of providence. How absurd therefore is it to raise ideas of vanity, or of self-importance, on what we *do*, or on what we *are*. All mankind, high, and low, rich, and poor, in fact differ from each other; only as stones laid higher or lower in a building. To raise the walls of a vaulted house, these or different courses are necessary: but it gives one course no intrinsic value over another. They are all equally instruments in the hands of the builder. Thus the human society requires, there should be some order kept up among the higher orders of men—that in this world some should range higher than others; yet it is the business of the christian religion to prevent the rules of society from making improper impressions on the minds of men. While the rules of society therefore oblige the higher orders of men to keep up something of rank, the

the precepts of christianity, as far as the heart is concerned, counteract those rules; and enjoin all mankind to consider themselves as instruments of equal value in the hands of that providence, which professes to be no respecter of persons.

As the consideration of our being mere instruments in the hands of providence, should check our vanity, and self-importance, so is it equally adapted to suppress malice, and revenge. The christian religion is consistent in all its parts. One part strengthens, and supports another; and here we have a great instance of it. Our blessed Saviour lays a principal stress, we know, on the forgiveness of our enemies; and in the doctrine of a *particular providence* we have a reason for it. This doctrine plainly shews us that our enemies must be considered, so far as they *concern us*, as mere instruments in God's hand; and we might as well bear malice against the fire, that burns us, or the flood, that overwhelms us. They are the means of *trial* to us; and we must practise our holy religion through these means.

But now, my friend, if you wish to excuse your wickedness, by supposing you work God's will, you will find yourself mistaken. Consider the case. If you had a headstrong, obstinate beast, and

and could not work with him in the way you desired, I suppose, you would endeavour to work with him in some other way. You do not make him a bad beast: you wish him to be otherwise: but being a bad beast, you make what use of him you can.---Thus God does not make you wicked; but being wicked, he uses you for his own wise purposes. And tho' he makes you the means of trial to others, he will still punish you for your wickedness; just as you correct your beast for its obstinacy.---Thus then, as no event can fall out without the direction of God, we must believe, that all the schemes, and wicked projects of our enemies against us are likewise under his direction. Nor do I know any thing so effectual in keeping down revengeful thoughts, and perfecting a christian life in this hardest of all lessons, as this very confession, that our enemies are only mere instruments in the hands of God.

Since then we may make such excellent use of the christian doctrine of a *particular providence*; drawing from it contentment of mind---a prefer-
vative against the mischief of vain hopes, and
vain fears---against vanity, and self-importance;
and lastly against malice---it will be wise in us to
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endeavour to impress our minds strongly with it. Consider how safe you think your affairs in the hands of a wife and prudent man. Dare not you give equal credit to God? Trust then to him. He is your truest friend. In his hands, who created, and preserves you, you must be safe. Leave him to be the conductor of your affairs. He knows them intimately : by him the *very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

SERMON XVI.

1 CORINTHIANS 10. XXXI.

WHETHER YE EAT OR DRINK, OR WHATEVER YE
DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

S*X days shalt thou labour, says the commandment, and do all that thou hast to do; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God.*—

This commandment some people are inclined to interpret very literally: as if all religion were confined to the sabbath; and had little, or nothing to do with the other six days of the week. If they go to church regularly on sunday, the busyness of religion is well performed for the week; and on this stock they go very unconcernedly about

about their ordinary affairs, and think no more of religious matters, till sunday comes round, when they put on their best clothes, and grave faces, and go to church.

Now tho' it is a very good thing to bring people at any rate to such a sense of their duty, as to go regularly to church, where, it may be hoped, they will at least receive some benefit; yet they certainly make a very great mistake, who think going to church is the chief part of religion: or indeed if they think going to church is any thing more than the *means* of being religious. If the religious thoughts we get at church, do not mix with all our actions, during the other days of the week, they are of as little value, as our food would be, if it did not tend to nourish the body, and fit it for the purposes of life.—Sunday's instruction soon flies off amidst the cares of the world, if it be not preserved by religious practice. You would see the absurdity at once, if a man should say, he would eat a hearty meal on-sunday, which should serve him, till sunday came again. But perhaps you do not see the same absurdity in taking your spiritual meal only on a sunday: and yet the sole difference is, that in one the body suffers, in the other the soul.

Religion

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Religion then was never meant to be confined to Sundays; but to guide us every day by its good precepts, and govern all our actions. Our lives are made up of actions. One action succeeds another; and yet in all this course of actions, there is hardly one, trifling as we may think it, which has not its faulty extreme, and which we may not make either right or wrong. In short we may turn almost every action of our lives into religion, by giving it a religious motive; and acting with a view to please God.

Now this is exactly the doctrine of the text. Nothing seems to have less of a religious cast about it, than eating and drinking; and yet the text plainly asserts, that we may turn eating, and drinking to the glory of God—that is, if we eat, and drink under such rules of temperance as the scriptures give us, and *practise* these rules *with a view to please God*, we may make even eating, and drinking, acts of religion.

In the following discourse I shall explain the text to you more fully by shewing in several instances, how you ought to carry your religion into common life.

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Your duty to God, in the first place, is not certainly confined to the prayers of the church. It is there indeed you make a public acknowledgment of God's infinite *power*, his *wisdom*, and his *goodness*. But if you do not carry these impressions home with you, and endeavour to excite them frequently by private prayer, and turning your thoughts to God, of what advantage are they?—You acknowledge at church God's infinite *power*, but if in the daily actions of your lives you do not live under the control of that power, the acknowledgment of it is hypocrisy. *Stand in awe, and sin not*, was David's rule in acknowledging the *power* of God.

Again, you acknowledge the infinite *wisdom* of God. Carry this home with you, and let it mix with your daily actions, and nothing can be more beneficial. While you follow your business honestly, and industriously, tho' things do not succeed to your wish, yet still, if you have this directing principle about you, you will not fret at the little accidents you meet with; but will take them patiently, as directed by a God of *infinite wisdom*. Anxiety will be lost in submission. Thus too, when you lie under the hand of God in sickness, or any great affliction, consider, these are the times, when
your

your belief in the *wisdom* of God should be of use to you. Without this, to acknowledge it in a prayer at church, is mere lip-service.

Thus again, you are told at church, that you should love God for his goodness to you; and, I doubt not you consider it as a duty. But how are you to perform this duty? Are you to leave it, where you found it, till the next Sunday; or to carry it home with you, and use it as a mean to make your lives better? If you love any of your fellow-creatures, you endeavour to please them by doing what they desire: you are always unhappy, if you leave any thing undone, which you know they wish you to do. And so it will be, if you really love God: you will shew your love by making it your daily endeavour to *please him*; and to avoid every thing, which will displease him.

Thus again, with regard to those duties we owe our neighbour, and ourselves, it is of no use to hear them explained at church, unless we carry them home with us as our bosom companions.—For instance, you are told, it is your duty to be just to your neighbour on all occasions; and when you hear this duty explained at church, you are convinced, I suppose of the reasonableness of

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honestly,

honestly. But my friend, do you carry this sense of your duty with you to market? Do you consider it of *most* use, when you are buying, and selling? Then it is that you are to recollect what you have learned at church. He who does not take his honestly with him to market, is like a man who goes there to buy goods, and forgets his money.—Let me just add, that if you deal honestly and fairly with your neighbour, and scorn to take the least advantage of him, you make the market, in *this instance*, more useful to you, than the church. At church, you only *learn* your duty; at market, you *practise* it.

Again, you are sometimes in circumstances when you have done something, which wants an excuse? A lye therefore would come in very commodiously. But recollect yourself. You are convinced, that truth is a great christian virtue. The question is, when ~~are~~ you to practise it? When you are engaged in some conversation, in which you are not tempted to tell a lye? Or when you are under that temptation? The temptation is the trial. Here you are put to the test. Of what avail is a man's strength, if he never put it forth, when he has most occasion for it?

Again,

Again, in your intercourse with the world, you must meet with many little affronts, and little injuries, that are in fact of no consequence. What do you learn on these points? You are universally enjoined to forgive such little injuries, to pass them over—and even to return good for evil. Here then you have a rule; and I suppose, if you believe what you hear at church, you must allow it to be a good rule. Pray then do not forget it when you feel an inclination to do a spiteful action to your neighbour.

Again, you go into company: you mix with your neighbours. The conversation falls on your acquaintance. Many things are said—free things, which ought not to be said. Characters are roughly treated. One is accused of an imprudent action—another of an absurd, ridiculous one—a third perhaps of something vicious—and none of them, it may be, on any better proof, than *I heard it said*, or *it is commonly reported*. And is this, think you, a sufficient foundation to injure your neighbour's character? If yours should be so treated, what would you think of such wantonness? Do you recollect hearing no texts of scripture, which order you, *not to judge your brother*—*not to behold the mate in your brother's eye*—

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to judge nothing by appearance---to speak no evil, one of another---to speak the truth in love. And are such passages of scripture to be of no use to you at the time when you most need them?

Consider then, when you go into company, that this is the time to obey the instructions you have then received; and in the midst of a lively hour, instead of defaming your neighbour, or making him appear ridiculous, (which is a very unkind way of defaming him) recollect the injunctions, which God hath laid upon you to bridle your tongue, and check such wantonness.

Again, you have gotten a habit of breaking out into passion on every trifling occasion. These passions lead you often into mischief. In the excesses of them you do, and say, many things, which afterwards make you very unhappy; and may be mischievous to your neighbour.---But you have rules, you know, to rectify all this: and you are well convinced, I suppose, that this excess of passion is wrong. You know also that you have the power to bridle it; and that the commands of God enjoin it. Why then is it *not* done? The reason is plain. You do not take the commands of God with you, as the rules of common life. You acknowledge them to be very proper,

proper, and very good: only you will chuse your own time to practise them. But you can only practise them in the ordinary affairs of life. They were intended for your use merely in the ordinary affairs of life; so that if you do not use them on these common occasions, as far as you are concerned; you may just as well blot them out of your bible,

Thus then you see, that all the precepts of the gospel are universally intended to be of use to us in the common affairs of life: and unless we make this use of them, our religion is a farce.—We must always therefore remember that they are not given us to improve us in *knowledge*, but in *practice*—not to *tell* us what we should be; but to *make* us what we should be. Without some attention however people are apt to mistake knowledge for practice.—But it is only in matters of religion that we are apt to make these mistakes. In the weighty concerns of the world, we are more upon our guard; and can distinguish very well between *knowledge* and *practice*.

Suppose a man makes himself master of some trade; but when he should exercise it, and earn his livelihood by it, he never troubles his head about

about it; what would his neighbours say?—Another again, lays down rules of prudence, to regulate his expences: but if he never think of these rules, when he spends his money, there is little doubt but his affairs will go wrong.—Again, if the husbandman never uses his knowledge of husbandry, when he sows his wheat, or his barley, he cannot surely be surpris'd if he have a bad harvest.

—But these are neglects, which rarely happen. He who has been at the pains of learning a trade, generally chuses, if he can, to make his advantage of it.—The cautious man of the world has generally his prudent maxims most ready, when he opens his purse—and the husbandman employs his best skill, when he sows his corn.

If then, in all worldly matters we are so careful to bring our knowledge into use, and make it answer the design that was intended; whence comes it that we are so deficient in the exercise of our spiritual knowledge? How can we think the rules of this life are necessary to regulate our actions here; and yet take so little account of those precepts, which are to lead us to happiness hereafter?

The man of learning may study the scriptures, as much as he please. He may read them in the original—

original Greek, and Hebrew. He may endeavour to solve all the difficulties he finds in them : but if he leave the life-directing precepts of the gospel out of the question, how much is he below the honest labourer, who after his day's work, closes his evening with his testament. Unlettered, he leaves difficulties behind him. They raise no doubts : they excite no speculations. He knows his bible is true, tho he does not understand every part of it. But what he understands he feels ; and shuts his book at the hour of rest ; blessing God for giving him such good instruction, and praying that he may always endeavour to make a right use of it.

Here we have an example, which mere learning cannot give. It shews (what we should always carefully remember) that religion is seated in the heart, not in the head. As the blood courses from the heart through all the veins, and gives life, and spirit to every part ; so should religion, springing from the same fountain, mix its precepts through our whole lives, and conversation. Let us then take it with us in all our concerns—whether we are abroad, or at home—whether we are alone, or in company—whether we are dealing with others, or concerting our own affairs, still let

let us keep this blessed monitor as our constant guide; continually asking ourselves, whether this or that action, as we perform it, is agreeable to the rules of religion; and praying fervently to Almighty God, that we may conscientiously endeavour to lay every action—even the most common actions of our lives, under this religious restraint; so that *whether we eat, or drink, or what-ever we do, we may do all to the glory of God.*

S E R M O N XVII.*

PSALM 75. ix. x.

IN THE HAND OF THE LORD THERE IS A CUP; AND
 THE WINE IS RED: IT IS FULL-MIXED, AND HE
 POURETH OUT OF THE SAME. AS FOR THE
 DREGS THEREOF, THE UNGODLY OF THE EARTH
 SHALL DRINK THEM, AND SUCK THEM OUT.

THE dispensations of God with regard to this world, are represented in scripture under various similitudes; not so much with a view to explain them, as to give us such conceptions of them only, as are necessary.—Among these several images, that of a *cup* is very frequent. It occurs in many of the divine writers—in David particularly. He speaks of the *cup of salvation*—of the *Lord's being the portion of his cup*—of his *cup*

* This Sermon was once printed on a particular occasion, but never published.

cup running over—and here, in this beautiful passage, he carries the illustration farther.—*In the hand of the Lord there is a cup; and the wine is red; it is full-mixed, and he poureth out of the same. As for the dregs thereof, the ungodly of the earth shall drink them, and suck them out.*

From these words I shall *first* examine the Contents of the Lord's cup: and shall *secondly* and *thirdly* shew you how the *Ungodly*, and how the *Godly* drink of it.

First, with regard to the Contents of the Lord's cup, we are told, *the wine is red*, but it is *full-mixed*;—that is, however fair the appearances of things may be, however splendid any state of happiness, or any situation of life may appear, it is *full-mixed*—there is always added to it a certain portion of evil. By *evil*, I mean only the usual misfortune and afflictions of human life. These are what temper the *cup of the Lord*: and in this *mixed* state it is poured out to the inhabitants of the earth.

All nature, as well as man, partakes of this mixture.—We see storms purifying the air; but at the same time destroying the labours of men—the seasons sometimes kind: but as often inclement

—rains

—rains fertilizing the earth; but also deluging it—the ground bearing fruits and grain; but weeds also and noxious herbs—the ocean expanding its broad bosom for the benefit of commerce; but the scene also of devouring tempests and overflowing tides.

If we examine animal life, as far as it respects man, we shall find here also the same mixture of good and evil. Some animals are useful for food; others for labour; and others for convenience; but a greater number we find are mischievous. The larger beasts of prey devour by their strength; the inferior by their craft; and the blighting insect by its multitude.

If from the irrational part of nature we take a view of man, and his labours, we shall find them equally blended with good and evil. In himself, what a compound of virtue and vice? Religion, and hypocrisy; honesty and deceit; charity, and malice; compassion, and unfeelingness; with many other contraries, are continually taking their turns in his mind. Good suggestions often impress him: but temptations are strong: and his practice wayward.

Man being thus compounded of good and evil, all his labours partake of the mixture. His food is

is turned to intemperance; his dress to vanity; his amusement to dissipation. Let him form what schemes, what plans, what systems he will; let him employ all his little prudence and foresight in bringing them to perfection; still he will find mixed with them in one shape or other, uncertainty, disappointment, and miscarriage.

Thus in the various circumstances of his life; good and bad pursue each other, like the lights and shadows of a stormy day. The sun may break out at intervals; yet it always happens, that either the morning, the noon, or at least the evening of his day is obscured. Light and darkness are not more connected than good and evil. David alluding to these sudden changes, tells us, that *heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

As this is the case therefore—as the *Lord's cup* is thus mixed with bitter as well as sweet ingredients; and as we all must drink it, let us examine in what way we may drink it best.—And *first* let us see, how the *Ungodly man* drinks it; which was the *second* point I proposed to consider.

The text says, *he drinks the dregs.* Now the dregs of any liquor are the pernicious parts. It is fairly

fairly implied therefore, that the Ungodly man turns both the good and evil of life to his own destruction.

Let us first see him in prosperous circumstances, with the cup of plenty in his hand. Here he appears in a very unfavourable light. Prosperity hardens him. It supplies nourishment to all his bad passions. *His* unfeeling heart is never touched by the wants of others. All is centered in himself.--if he has been by the favour of Providence, successful in any trade or profession, it is then his language---at least his sentiment---that he has made himself happy---let others take the same means if they will.---If they have been less prudent, or less industrious than he has been, let them suffer for their folly. In short, from looking up to no cause above him; but thinking himself the source of all his enjoyments, he begins to fancy himself superior to others, and of course holds others in contempt. He becomes arrogant, proud, and assuming: and his features are commonly marked with what the Psalmist so expressively calls *the scornful reproof of the wealthy*.

In his gratifications, perhaps the *Ungodly* man takes the road of pleasure. Then all is riot and excess:

excess: religion, conscience, decency, are no limits to him.---Ruin often succeeds.

But perhaps he drinks the cup of prosperity more cautiously. He has the foresight to provide against the ruin which destroys the thoughtless prodigate, and to act under the influence of worldly wisdom. Then we see him enjoying his prosperity in a different way. Instead of squandering his wealth, he hoards it. Every increase of his fortune, increases also his desires. The same hardness of heart, which the other shewed in providing for his pleasures, he shews in raising an estate. Conscience and religion are equally the scorn of both.

The prosperity of the *Ungodly* man takes commonly one or the other of these courses; the *blessings* of the Lord's cup he turns to his own destruction. As he is ill qualified to receive *good* from the Lord, let us now see whether he is better qualified to receive *evil*; for, as we observed, the cup of the Lord is *full-mixed*. Evil in some shape, will sooner or later certainly overtake him. When the weight of misfortune, or the distress of sickness, or the infirmities of age come upon him, then the *dregs of the Lord's cup* become a bitter potion to him. Like a froward child

child he knows not what he wants. Every thing distresses, nothing can please him. He never feels the joys of religion—the satisfaction of a good conscience or the tranquility of a peaceful mind, which alone can sooth the anxiety of misfortune, or ease the bed of sickness. Now he suffers that keen distress, which he never *pitied* in others---that want of assistance himself, which he never administered to them.

Thus wretched in himself, you see him in a still more disagreeable light when he mixes with others. See him when you will, he is either finding fault, or making complaint. But follow him home, and you will there find his ill-humours breaking out with double force. Miserable are all, who are thus unhappily connected with him. Instead of the mild, sweet smile of suffering piety, the softened look of tenderness, with which every offer to do him service should be received; he spurns the hand that soothes him. The kindest offers to serve him, are received like injuries. The tenderness of relations, the consolation of friends, instead of asswaging his ill-humours, serve only to excite them. Peevish and fretful, he distributes his own sufferings in large proportions upon his servants, dependants, and nearer

connections. And yet tho you would imagine he was wholly out of love with life, and wished for nothing more, than to leave it with disgust, you are mistaken. He seems fonder of it, at least more loth to leave it, than the man who enjoys it most. His attachment to the expiring moments of life, is most happily expressed in the text: he not only drinks the dregs of the cup; but he keeps them to his mouth as long as he can---*he sucks them out.*---The most horrible sight which the world can furnish, is that of a wicked wretch on the edge of eternity; when all hope of life is over, and he has just sensibility enough to see before him the gulf of despair---Let us turn aside from a spectacle, which makes the blood run cold; and see as we proposed *thirdly*, how the *Godly man* drinks of the Lord's cup.

As the ungodly man drinks the *dregs*, the *finer parts* of the liquor are of course the portion of the Godly man. In the first place he expects to find a degree of evil in his cup. He sees the propriety of it, and fully acknowledges the great usefulness of this *mixture* of good and evil. If the potion were perfectly palatable, he fears he might drink to excess. If all things went smooth and

and easy with him---if in the current of life, no rubs, no stoppages, no difficulties, ever occurred what would be the consequence? He might be secure in the midst of danger. Tho mortal, he might never think of mortality. The difficulties of life---the frequent checks he meets with, are what put him continually on his guard. Disappointment corrects his passions; and shews him that he is not to imagine he must have things here as he pleases; but must expect his portion of evil. He takes the world therefore for what it is, and does not fix his happiness upon it.

All this in the sincerity of his heart, he acknowledges, and approves; and thus far even his reason carries him. But when he opens the word of God, he finds the various dispensations of heaven placed in a still juster light. He finds this world represented in the gospel as a state of trial, preparatory to future happiness; and the good and evil of life, as *the means of this trial*; contributing equally to *exercise* and *prove* his religion.

Many are the virtues which *prosperity* gives him room to exercise; and which he could not exercise amidst the *evils* of life; and many are the virtues, which are the attendants of *affliction*; and

are little known in the prosperous hour. He drinks the cup of the Lord, therefore, as the Lord intends.

When it pleases heaven to bless him; when his designs succeed; and his hopes dilate in some view of happiness before him, “Now is the time,” (he suggests to himself) “when I must guard my heart with double care. Now is the time, when insolence, and wantonness, and pride, the attendants of a prosperous hour, are most liable to corrupt me. Let prosperity soften my heart, instead of hardening it. Let me be humble, and mild, and condescending, and obliging to all. In the midst of my own enjoyments, let my heart expand. Let me feel the misery of others; and turn my plenty, to the relief of their necessity.”

Again, when it pleases heaven to mix some bitter ingredients in his cup, still he has the same sense of acting under the will of God. “Now,” he cries, is the time, when I am to exercise patience and resignation. Now my religion is put to the test. *Shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not receive evil?*—Gracious God! grant that I may improve my heart under this trial of my faith; and make my sufferings

SERMON XVII.

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ings through Jesus Christ, the means of purifying my affections. Let me for his sake bear a trifling part of what he bore for me; and let me keep that great pattern of suffering resignation always before my eyes."

Thus the *Godly man* drinks of the Lord's cup, and his draught whether sweet, or bitter, is whole some to him. This blessed resignation of his own will in all instances to the will of God, regulates his affections---corrects his thoughts---and draws him back to the sober recollection of his station here; by checking each idea as it arises, of depending on worldly happiness. And yet, tho his pious resignation lessens the world in his eye, it is so far from interfering with his worldly happiness, that it sheds the sunshine of chearfulness continually in his breast.---But most of all when the world sinks under him, he feels its blessed effects. While life is extinguishing, it is a cordial to pain; and gives tranquility to death.

Let us then after the *Godly man's* example, take the Lord's cup with all its ingredients *full-mixed*, into our hands Let us always remember whose cup it is, and who *pours it out*. It is the Lord himself. Whatever therefore the draught is, let us consider

consider it as mixed and tempered by the great physician of our souls. It may be unpalatable---but it is our own fault, if it be not beneficial.

SERMON XVIII.

2 CORINTHIANS 7. 1.

HAVING THEREFORE THESE PROMISES, DEARLY BELOVED, LET US CLEANSE OURSELVES FROM ALL FILTHINESS OF FLESH, AND SPIRIT; PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD.

IN the preceding chapter the apostle reminded his new converts of the Corinthian church, of the many sufferings, and distresses of his christian warfare. He informs them of *stripes, and imprisonments; of tumults, and labours; of watchings, and fastings*; implying, at the same time, that what he had undergone, they must likewise expect to undergo. And in these things indeed the early professors of the christian religion were continually exercised.—*Their's* was a warfare indeed.

They

They had difficulties to struggle with, of which we know nothing.—But people were *then* in earnest about religion; and thought it the great concern of their lives. *They* were then readier to suffer for its sake, the worst calamities of human nature; than *we* are to deny ourselves the pleasures of sin.—But let these reflections pass at present.

To support the Corinthian disciples under the difficulties, which the apostle enumerates, he goes on, by calling to their remembrance, the *promises of God*. God hath promised, he tells them, always to assist his pious servants. It is his constant language in scripture, *I will be their God; and they shall be my people. I will be a father unto them; and they shall be sons, and daughters unto me, saith the Lord*. The apostle having thus encouraged them under their approaching difficulties, draws his conclusion from the words of the text: *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh, and spirit; perfecting holiness in the fear of God*.

I shall examine these words by shewing you, *first* what the promises are to which the apostle refers--and *secondly* the effect, which they ought to have upon us.

With

With regard to the *first* of these heads, the apostle only tells us---that if we are obedient children, God will be our father. Now this is only a general manner of speaking, but it refers plainly to all the promises of every kind, which the christian religion makes to man. If *God* be our father, and *we* his children, we are led to hope for every thing, which as a father he hath graciously promised to his obedient children. We hope for the forgiveness of our sins, through the atoning blood of Christ—we hope for his becoming a reconciled father to us in Christ Jesus—we hope for the assistance of his gracious spirit in all the difficulties of a christian life—we hope for a glorious resurrection from the dead—and lastly, we hope for an eternity of future happiness. So that in short, as a child is taught to expect from its parent, so are we taught to expect from God every good, of which our nature is capable.

These are the great promises, which the christian religion makes to man; and which the apostle refers to in the text.—But now the effect of these promises on *us*, it is evident, depends entirely on our believing them. Hence our Saviour always makes faith the first article of christianity.—Unless therefore we really, and from our hearts *believe*

lieve the gospel; it is impossible we should pay any attention to its promises.

The things of this world are present—the promises of the gospel lie at a distance; and if you have not faith enough to bring them nearer to you, you cannot be influenced by them.—Suppose now the case of a person shut out during the early part of his life from seeing any objects, except those at hand. Such a person could have no idea of distance. Bring him suddenly where he had an extended view of a country lying before him, point out to him a mountain, which you tell him is very lofty, or a lake, which is very extensive, he cannot enter into your ideas; he cannot believe that distant objects, which appeared to his eye so little; were really larger, than the things, which he saw at hand.—What! he would ask, is that house, which appears to me as a mere speck, in fact larger, than the house, which I see close to me; and which I can walk round and examine?—But let this person gain the thorough use of his eyes, if I may so speak, by *experience*; and he will soon know that distance makes no alteration in the things themselves; but will firmly believe the house in question, however small it may appear at

a distance, to be in fact greater than the house, which appears so much larger on the spot.

Now this is just the case of faith. The man who has no faith, who has never examined distant objects, thinks the things of this world, which are present, much greater than the promises of the gospel which are at a distance. While the true believer who sees clearly with the eye of faith, which is *the evidence of things not seen*, knows that distance makes no alteration in the things themselves: and therefore *he* is fully assured, that the promises of God, *tho* at a distance, are much greater, than the things of this world which are present before him.

These are the only persons on whom the promises of God can have any effect.—And believing, let me tell you, is more in our own power, than we are willing perhaps to imagine. A good disposition, and a sound faith are nearly connected: and there are very few who disbelieve the gospel, who have not some secret sin, some prejudice, or some system of their own, at the bottom of their hearts, which makes them wish to disbelieve it. Well-meaning men will *naturally*, if I may so speak, embrace it. Its precepts are congenial to them. On them therefore its promises will have a proper effect.—Let us then consider, as I proposed *secondly*,

secondly, what the effect is, which the *promises* of the gospel, will have upon well-disposed, and believing men.—*Having therefore these promises, they will cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh, and spirit: perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

The filthiness of flesh, and spirit is a general expression to denote wickedness of every kind. By the filthiness of the *flesh*, the apostle means those sins, which are open and manifest. We have many catalogues of them in scripture; adulteries, fornications, uncleanness, lasciviousness.—By the filthiness of the *spirit* are probably meant sins of a more secret nature. You understand, I suppose, that a sin may be committed in the heart, without going any farther. All our evil thoughts, when *indulged*, are sins of the heart, or spirit; as are all our wicked intentions; covetous desires; and a variety of other sins, which go no farther, than our own conception of them; and are a kind of sins between God, and our own consciences. The world knows nothing of them.—The heart of man is a sink of great filthiness: and there is many a one, no doubt, who bears a decent outward character, who may in fact be any thing that is bad. He may defraud his neighbour—in his heart—

he

he may commit a breach of trust—in his heart—he may commit adultery—in his heart—that is, if he be resolved, or even wishes to commit any of these sins, and is prevented only through the fear of discovery, or the want of opportunity, he has the guilt of those sins undoubtedly upon him; and yet the world is never the wiser. He is still a decent christian, and passes in the world for a good man.—I need not however dwell longer on this part of my subject. The *filthiness of flesh and spirit*, in all its distinctions, is a point, I fear, too well known to us all. Let me rather proceed to shew you, as my subject leads, the effect, which the promises of the gospel ought to have upon you.

Now if you are really persuaded of their value, the first, and most *natural* effect, which these promises will have upon you, is to consider how you may attain them. This, you know, in all worldly matters, is the first step, you always take. If you are convinced, that a thing is worth having, and is in your power, you immediately cast about how you may get it. If you want to take a farm, for instance, and have one in your eye, which you find in all circumstances desirable; the next point is, how are you to get possession of it?—Should you offer

offer a round sum for it at once?—or perhaps a smaller sum at first, than you might be tempted to give as the bargain proceeds? or would it not be better perhaps to employ a third person? What ever to your judgment appears the right way, that way you will infallibly take.

Now this is just the matter before you. God Almighty hath made you certain promises: He hath promised you his holy spirit in this world, pardon for your sins, and everlasting life in the next. If therefore you believe in these promises, you will go the same way to work in endeavouring to obtain them. You will cast about in one case, as in the other, what is the right way to take; and if you are as much in earnest in one case, as in the other, that is, if you really believe the kingdom of heaven is as valuable as a good farm; you will as infallibly take what appears to you to be the right way to obtain it.

Now in taking a farm it may be matter of some difficulty, to go the right way to work; and to make the most advantageous bargain: and there may be various difficulties, and objections of one kind or other, which may make it a nice matter—a business of great importance.—But in obtaining the kingdom of heaven, there are no niceties at all.

all. The method of securing the *promises of God*, is placed directly before you. The apostle in plain words, tells you, they are to be obtained, by *cleansing yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit: and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Now, the gospel endeavours to incite men against sin, by placing it before them in various lights. Sometimes sin is represented to us under the notion of a yoke or bondage, which is grievous to be borne.—Sometimes it is represented as the greatest ingratitude to our Creator, and Redeemer; as *doing despite to the spirit of God.* At other times it is represented to us in all its terrors, as drawing upon us the fiery indignation of God--- *tribulation, and anguish, upon every soul of man, that doeth evil.*—In the exhortation before us, it is represented to us under the idea of *filthiness.* In this light we are to consider sin, as the great evil, which *taints and corrupts* our souls; and renders them unfit for heaven. The scripture uses the idea of *filthiness* to explain the nature of sin. It is a familiar image. We all know that filthiness, by degrees eats into the flesh--that it fouls the blood, and brings on diseases--that it makes men loathsome, and offensive to others; and not fit to appear in company. It is not Poverty,

verty, that is offensive. Poverty, tho in the most homely drefs; yet if it be cleanly, which is in every body's power, and makes the most of the little matters it has, Poverty is a decent figure.

But when we see people covered with *filthiness*; which we know can hardly be the case, unless attended with sloth, we cannot help taking offence.

Now this is just the idea, which the apostle, means here to convey of sin. Sin makes our souls as impure, as filthiness does our bodies. It makes us as offensive in the sight of God, as filthiness makes us loathsome in the sight of our fellow-creatures. Heaven is a place of the utmost purity. If therefore we would attain the *promises of God*; and gain a happy admittance into this blessed place, we must take the method, which God prescribes; and cleanse ourselves from all *filthiness of flesh, and spirit*: that is, we must endeavour to wash sin from our souls, as we do filth from our bodies

The text goes still farther, and on the strength of the promises, enjoins us the duty of *perfecting holiness in the fear of God*. By *holiness* the apostle means piety, charity, humility, and all other christianian graces, which are to take possession of our minds, when they are cleansed from filthiness.

These

These we are to *perfect*, as far as we can, which the scripture elsewhere calls *growing in grace*. A Christian should never be at a stand; and indeed, if he be truly sincere, he never *can* be at a stand: he will, as naturally endeavour to proceed to greater degrees of goodness, as the wise man of this world endeavours to increase his wealth, or his honours, or any thing else his heart is set on. A man cannot help proceeding in the thing he wishes. So that the scripture-precept of *perfecting holiness*, is not barely an injunction; but it is a test like-wise of our sincerity; and he, who cannot produce this test of his being in earnest, may depend upon it that he is *not* in earnest.

The expression in *the fear of God* is added, because nothing tends more to strengthen us in our good resolutions of *perfecting holiness*, than the *fear of God*---that is, a religious awe and reverence for God.---To have it always in our minds that God is ever present with us,---that he sees all our actions, and knows all thoughts, is certainly one of the best means to make our thoughts, and our actions what they ought to be. We should therefore, above all other things, encourage in ourselves *the fear of God*, as it will above all other things tend to our *perfecting holiness*.

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Thus

Thus I have gone through the explanation of the text, as I designed. I have shewn you what the promises are, to which the apostle refers; and what effect they should have upon us.---I shall conclude with just one observation more.

It is not an indifferent matter, my brethren, whether you accept the offer of the *promises*, or not. In many of the things of this world, you have a choice. You may accept a thing, if it be offered; or, if you do not choose to accept it, you are only where you were. There is no harm done. But here the case is different. If you refuse the *promises*, your refusal is guilt; and you will not only lose the *promises*; but draw upon yourselves the *punishment* of disobedience.

The question then, in fact, is, not so much whether you will accept the *promises*, as, whether you will live godly, or wicked lives? So that the whole argument is reduced to this one plain question, whether you will save your own souls?--May God of his infinite mercy assist us all in determining this question in such a manner as the importance of it deserves!

SERMON XIX.

PSALM 119. LXXIX.

I CALLED MINE OWN WAYS TO REMEMBRANCE;
AND TURNED MY FEET UNTO THY TESTIMONIES.

THE meaning of the text, is, that if you wish to cherish in yourself a sense of religion, you must frequently examine your past life--you must recollect your miscarriages; and form good resolutions for the future. *You must call your ways to remembrance, that you may turn your feet to God's testimonies.* A man can hardly live ill, who frequently examines his past life in this religious manner; and he can hardly live well, who neglects it.

Is it otherwise, think you, in religion, than it is in common life? To examine frequently your accounts, you know, is the certain way to be acquainted with the state of your affairs; and to keep them in order. And it is just the same in religion. Nothing is more useful in keeping a clear account with your own souls, (which is certainly the best account you can keep) than a frequent examination of your lives. People too, who are ready at accounts, find it an easy matter to balance them; and keep them regular. And their doing it frequently makes it easy. It is thus also in religion. People of great piety, who have long, in the scripture-phrase, *walked with God*, are ready at their spiritual accounts. The balance against them, it may be hoped, is not very great, and they can easily bring it to account.

As it is not every body however, who is so well skilled in this spiritual kind of arithmetic, I shall endeavour to make it more easy to such of you, as are not, by giving you a few rules that may assist you in the practice of it.

The first rule I shall recommend to you, is, *to compare your lives with your duty.*

Now

Now there is often much self-deceit in this matter of comparing. We are sometimes apt to think our *duty* too strict a rule ; and are therefore inclined to seek for a more commodious one--something more pliant, and easy.

Some, for instance, instead of comparing their lives with their duty, are more ready to compare them *with the mercies of God*. "Our sins, it is true, they cry, are great : but the mercies of God are greater." And then they can bring texts of scripture to their memory, setting forth his *goodness, and unwillingness to punish the children of men*--that he *willeth not the death of a sinner* ; and so forth.

And all this is very true ; and a great source of comfort it is, if it be properly applied. God is unwilling no doubt, to punish the children of men. But then the mischief is, these people forget, there are as many texts of scripture, which prove the justice of God, as his mercy. God is merciful, no doubt, to sinners. The redemption of the world by Christ is abundant proof.---But we must not suppose they are such sinners, as continue in sin, that *Grace may abound* : but such sinners, as abhor sin, and from their hearts repent of it. As certainly therefore as God's mercy will
par-

pardon the penitent sinner, so certainly will his justice find out him who continues *wilfully wicked*—who trusting in the divine mercy, without considering the divine justice, endeavours to screen his sins, as it were, behind the altar of God.

Others again addicted perhaps to some favourite wickedness, are apt to compare their sins, with what they may suppose their virtues. A man cries, It is true I am a great sinner: but I give alms to the poor—or I go constantly to church—or I do something, which I hope will lessen the guilt of my sins; and perhaps, upon the whole, make a sort of balance in my favour.

To such a man, the word of God thus speaks: *He who is guilty of one is guilty of all.* That is, he who can commit one sin deliberately, and with his eyes open; and excuse, and justify himself for that one sin, would as readily commit another sin—or any sin—if the temptation had been as strong. There is no goodness in such a man.

Another again is ready to lay a stress upon the profession, in which he is engaged—the customs of the world, with which, his circumstances oblige him to comply; and other things which he hopes God will graciously be pleased to take into the account: “This business, (he cries) in which I
“ am

“ am engaged—or this manner of life, in which
 “ my fortune has placed me, requires me to do
 “ many things, which I do not exactly like. But
 “ if I do them not, I must be the last of my pro-
 “ fession—or I must perhaps lay it wholly aside
 “ —or I must be despised, and laughed at, by
 “ my equals.”

Now in the first place, I apprehend such pleas
 are commonly ill-grounded. If indeed the profes-
 sion in which you are engaged, is in itself an ini-
 quitous one, the sooner you get out of it, the
 better. But if your profession be an honest one, I
 cannot conceive you will thrive the worse for fair-
 dealing; or lose your credit, if every one, who
 passes your door, points to it, and says, *There dwells*
an honest man.---After all however, if you cannot
 give up the ways of the world; but must put
 them in comparison with your duty, the minister of
 the gospel can only repeat what the apostle says;
The friendship of the world is enmity with God.

Lastly, there are some, on these occasions, who,
 instead of comparing their lives, with their duty,
 compare them with the lives of others. If a man
 appear to himself less wicked than his neighbour,
 it is well. He is on the safe side. He has gotten
 a skreen between him and the worst. And it is
 hard

hard, if among the herd of miserable sinners, every man cannot find one, whose life he may think more wicked than his own. This was a kind of self-examination, you know, practised formerly by an old sinner, recorded for his presumption : *God ! I thank thee, he cried, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, and covetous ; or even as this Publican.* That is, he thought, he had found a man more wicked than himself ; and on the easy credit of another's sin, thought he had happily secured a balance in his own favour.---But in the book of God it was written otherwise. There it only heightened his guilt---for he that exalteth *himself*, shall be abased : but he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

In this great matter then between God, and your souls, trust not to this, or that, or any other deceitful plea : but be assured, you have no way of recommending yourselves to God ; but by comparing your lives with your duty. That is the only kind of comparison, in which you can trust. If you find the habit of any sin increasing upon you, you have nothing to do with the practice of other people.---You have nothing to do with what is common in one state of life, or allowed in another.---All you have to enquire about, is, whether

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whether the thing is forbidden in the word of God : if it be, all pleas, and excuses for transgression, and all the interpretations, which the wit of man can invent, are deceitful, and wicked. You have nothing to trust to, but your own pious endeavours—the grace of God which will assist those endeavours ; and the merits of a holy Saviour, which will make atonement for your deficiencies.

Let me now give you a second rule to assist you. It is frequently to renew the good resolutions you make, and to compare them with your endeavours to keep them. A good resolution, no doubt, is so far virtuous. It is the first step of reviving piety. But consider, that if it end here, it is nothing. If you have a journey to take, it is something to make yourself ready, and to set out : but, at the same time, it is of no consequence, if you only take the first stage, and return.—Consider this point well. It is of infinite importance. Do not amuse yourselves with general notions. Go to particulars. There you come at the truth, which is lost in general comparisons.—You have had a custom of swearing perhaps ; perhaps of drinking ; or of lewdness ; or of sabbath-breaking ; or of some other wickedness. Have you in the first

first place, ever seriously considered in what a heinous offence to God, you are daily living? Have you ever considered what consequences you are drawing on yourself, if you should be cut off, in the midst of your sins, before you have thoroughly forsaken them? Have you ever made a resolution against the particular sin you are addicted to? And how have you kept that resolution?—Do not be afraid. Search to the bottom of your heart. It is a necessary work. Has God almighty seen, that you have been seriously in earnest to keep your resolution? Can you lay your hand upon your breast, and call God to witness, that you have done your utmost to get the better of your darling sin, whatever it is?—that if you have ever been surprised again after your resolution, it gives you double distress—and rouses your resolution to exert itself still more?—If you are clear in all these points, there is hope, through God's assistance, that you may gain a complete victory.—If not, your resolutions signify nothing—unless indeed to increase your guilt. A man may *put his hand*, you know, *to the plough*; but he may also *look back*; and if he do, you remember what follows—he is *not fit for the kingdom of God*.

And

And now, do not pretend to say, that you have tried, and cannot get the better of a wicked habit. It is an untruth. Every habit may be conquered. Difficult I grant it is, if you have long suffered your bad habit to grow upon you. But with your own best endeavours, and God's assistance through Christ, every habit may be overcome. *With men it may be impossible: but with God all things are possible.*

On a supposition that a good resolution is taking firm root in you, I shall just suggest one rule more, which may assist you in the examination of yourselves; and keep you still more steady in your purposes. The rule is, to compare the sins you have at any time been guilty of, with the pleasure, or pain; the advantage, or disadvantage, you may have received from them. By this you will get a just information of what you have already gained, or lost by sin; and may judge what you have hereafter to expect. So that, on the whole, you may judge, whether you are likely to be a gainer, or a loser by the bargain.

Perhaps you have gotten a habit of drinking. The question is, What advantage have you gained

ed by it? I suppose you will alledge the pleasure of drinking—and enjoying the mirth of a few riotous companions—perhaps, if you durst speak out, you may alledge the pleasure of getting drunk. This is all however you can alledge. But now, on the other hand, what have you lost by it? Not to mention the concern of your soul, you have lost perhaps your health—you are become bloated, and diseased—you have lost your character probably as a punctual man of business—--you have lost your friends, and customers—you have brought your family perhaps to beggary. At least you have been *injured* in some of these things, Are you then a gainer upon the whole? If not, lay it down as a rule, that the pleasure of drinking, costs more than it is worth; and that you will endeavour with all your might to break yourself of this vile habit, and become a sober man.*

Perhaps you have gotten a habit of swearing, What advantage arises from this sin? Recollect all you have gained by it.—What! Can you recollect nothing? Does no advantage of any kind

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* In the hour of felivity, when the bounds of temperance are exceeded, there is little difference between the riotous mirth, and loose conversation of the higher, and lower vulgar. Drunkennes is a great leveller.

arise from it? What a fool then you are, to risk damnation for nothing. By all means lay aside this sin, as above all others a losing bargain.

In this way, I would advise you, in all other instances, to compare the sin you have committed, with the pain it hath cost you; or the injury you have received from it.---And is any great wisdom, think you, requisite for this? You have sense enough when you go to market, not to give more for a thing, than it is worth. At market, you take care to inform yourselves of the goodness of the several commodities you purchase. You enquire into their real worth; and then into the price that is set upon them; and you hold off in your bargain, till you have adjusted the one to the other. You would fear your neighbours would laugh at you, if they should see you give twice as much for a commodity as it was worth: your sense and judgment would be called in question.---Let me then beseech you only to be as careful in a business, that concerns your *immortal souls*, as you are in a *two-penny matter* at a market.---When you go to market therefore for the pleasures of sin (for this is in fact, the case: you buy a commodity by paying a price) consider well, before you strike the bargain by committing the sin. Examine the real value

value of the pleasures it promises---how short they are---what their nature is; and what their circumstances? Examine next, the price you are to pay---whether for the pleasure of getting drunk, for instance, or for the pleasure of cursing, and swearing---or for any other unlawful pleasure, you are not charged more than the thing is really worth?---Now if you could only coolly, and deliberately prevail with yourselves to do this, when you go to purchase the pleasures of sin, one should hope, the drunkard, the common-swearer, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and all other sinners, would draw back a little, before they ventured to make so disadvantageous, so deceitful, so ruinous a bargain.---Our blessed Saviour, you may remember, takes notice of this miserable kind of traffic: and let his words sink deep into your hearts. *What is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul.*

Lastly, to incline us still more to *examine our ways, and turn our feet unto God's testimonies*, let us add fervent prayer to God. Before the great searcher of hearts, let us humbly *confess* those sins, which we *cannot hide*; and bewail those corruptions

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ruptions, which we cannot wholly overcome: praying always, that God will assist us by his holy spirit--that he will succour us in the hour of temptation---that he will strengthen our resolutions; help us to gain a conquest over sin---and finally pardon us through the atonement of a blessed Redeemer.

Thus, my brethren, let us all, by our own best endeavours, assisted by the grace of God, examine our accounts here, in order to fit ourselves for that great account, we must all render up to God hereafter. *His* will stand the clearest in that great day, whose accounts with his own soul have here been kept the most exact.——And may God, of his infinite mercy, grant, that we may all *to call our ways to remembrance, that we may turn our feet unto his testimonies.*

SERMON

SERMON XX.

1 CORINTHIANS 9. X.

HE THAT PLOUCHETH, SHOULD PLOUGH IN HOPE—
AND HE THAT THRASHETH IN HOPE, SHOULD BE
PARTAKER OF HIS HOPE.

GOD hath given us in the bible, the clearest
revelation of his will : but he hath also
given us, to assist the bible, books of instruction
wherever we throw our eyes. The man, who seeks
for religious wisdom, can throw them no where,
without receiving it. The lillies of the field,
which are *cut down, and wither*, will impress him
with the great lesson of mortality. The ravens,
which *sow not, nor gather into barns*, will teach
him dependence on divine providence. The
slugard is sent to the ant for instruction--the
intempe-

intemperate man, to the sow, that walloweth in the mire---and the proud man is put in mind of the worm which is destined, one day, to banquet upon him.

But amidst all the topics of instruction, which the book of nature holds out, there are none so apt, and various, as those suggested in the text, from the culture of the earth. The husbandman has the book of wisdom continually before him; and it is his own fault, if he do not gather instruction from it.

To assist him however in reading this wise book, tho indeed it is open to us all, I shall, in the following discourse, point out a few of those various pieces of instruction, it sets before us.

And first, the very ground you cultivate, affords much instruction. Without proper tillage, you know, it will bear nothing: and the more it is cultivated, the more it will produce. And tho there are many different kinds of soil, yet none is so bad, but it may be improved; and none so good, but without improvement, it will become barren.---Now what instruction have we here! How aptly does the ground represent our minds; and bring daily to our remembrance the
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need we have of culture. As the ground must be disposed to receive the seed, so must our minds to receive the truths of the gospel. A proud, self-conceited disposition effectually stops all the inlets to religious knowledge. Prejudices become arguments; and our own reason, however uninformed, becomes the standard of truth.

Our blessed Saviour, you remember, in one of his parables, explains the different dispositions of men towards religious truth, by different kinds of ground. He speaks of the hardened ground, that will receive no seed---of the neglected ground, in which the seed is choked---and of the good ground which being properly prepared, brings forth fruit in abundance. As our blessed Saviour himself therefore uses this explanation, you may be sure it is a just one. You ought all therefore to consider this parable as spoken to you; and each of you reflect, which of these several kinds of ground, he resembles---whether your minds are open, and ready to receive instruction---or whether they are shut up and hardened against it?

After the instruction, which you receive from the ground, consider next, what instruction may be gathered from seed-time. On this, you know,
all

all the hopes of the husbandman depend. If he did not sow his seed, he could have no hope of harvest. And does not this teach you a lesson of the utmost consequence? Can *you* have any expectation of a blessed harvest, if you have made no preparation for it by a seed-time? Let those who will not read God's word in one way, read it in another. From the field they may learn, that as it is necessary to sow seed in order to produce a harvest; so surely, is religious instruction, necessary to form a christian. What makes the difference between the mind of a heathen, and that of a christian? The one has received instruction, the other has not.---By *receiving instruction* is not meant barely listening to it; but laying it up in your minds. I speak however only of *religious instruction*. To numbers of you much learning would be of little use. But without filling your minds with religious knowledge, by reading, hearing, and meditating, they will be like mere uncultivated wastes.

From the seed-time let us follow the corn, as it springs up. Here you observe a new appearance. *As the blade cometh up, then come up the tares also*---those weeds of various kinds, which spring up

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among

among the corn. Here the husbandman's labour is again called out. If he be not at the pains of cutting down the weeds, his corn will be greatly injured, if not destroyed.—Besides, the evil does not stop in the weeds themselves. If they are left to increase, the mischief spreads. Each of them sheds its seed; and if the noxious produce be not stopped, the ground is entirely fouled. He certainly, who cuts down the weeds as early as he can, and keeps continually preventing their growth, takes the best method of keeping his ground clean. When the weeds are suffered to feed, the evil is almost past prevention.

What admirable instruction arises from all this? Our Saviour says, on many occasions; *He who hath ears to hear, let him hear*. To him, who looks into this book of wisdom, it may be said, he who hath eyes to see, let him see. One should think indeed he could hardly help seeing, how plainly the follies and vices of men are displayed in the weeds mixed among the corn. Most men have their minds sown with both. Few are without some good seed in their hearts; and no man is without many weeds.—Here then is a labour imposed on us all. If we think it necessary to cleanse our fields from weeds; how much more necessary

necessary is it to destroy the weeds in our minds
 ---those bad inclinations of various kinds, which
 spring up in them ? Some fields produce one kind
 of weed more than another ; as some men are ad-
 dicted more to one kind of wickedness, than ano-
 ther. But we all may have business enough of
 this kind on our hands.---We see also, that if the
 husbandman does not destroy the weeds, every
 one by attaining its growth, multiplies.---It is thus
 too with all wicked habits. Wickedness produces
 its seed, and increaseth, like all other weeds : and
 we may lay it down as a rule, that he, who *indul-*
ges any one wickedness, will not scruple another :
 nay that he will probably indulge any, whenever a
 proper temptation occurs,

When the corn is ripe, the harvest comes on.
 The reapers enter the field---the corn is cut down ;
 and laid up in barns. The quality of the grain is
 now fixed. This is the most important season.
 After this, the grain neither attains increase, nor
 suffers diminution.---What an instructive lesson
 have we here ! How strongly are we reminded of
 the great consequences of mortality ! We are cut
 down by death, like the harvest of the field. As
 the quality of the grain is fixed, when it is cut
 down ;

down ; so is also the state of the foul. Good, and bad, with regard to it, is now decided ; and it has only to await the general doom. In the mean time, as the corn when cut, is harvested, and laid up in barns ; so when we are dead, our great harvest-home ensues. We are laid up in our last repository, the grave, till the day of judgment.

After the corn is laid up in the barn, the great *trial* of it comes on. It is brought to the thrashing-floor ; where the goodness or badness of the grain at once appears. Its goodness, or badness was *fixed*, as we observed, at the harvest : but it is the thrashing-floor, which *discovers* it ; and the winnowing fan, which separates the grain from the chaff.—Here we have so exact a representation of the last great judgment ; that one should think it could hardly be overlooked. We are brought before our great judge ; who with an unerring rule separates the good from the bad. The thrashing-floor, and the winnowing fan are indeed such exact representations of the great conclusion of all things ; that they are often, in this view, alluded to in scripture. We read there of our great judge, *whose fan is in his hand, with which he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into*
his

his garner; but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Thus I have explained to you, my brethren, some of the great religious truths, which arise from the consideration of the common labours of the husbandman. The preparation of the ground---the sowing of the seed---the weeding of it while it grows---the reaping of it---the harvest-home---the thrashing-floor, and the winnowing fan, may all put us in mind of some great truth, which may be useful to us, in our religious life---truths which tho more plainly revealed in scripture, God hath thought proper also daily to remind us of in the works of his creation.

But now, besides these great truths, there are many others, which an observant person may draw from the various parts of tillage.

In the first place, nobody has such frequent opportunities, as the husbandman of adoring the over-ruling hand of God, in preserving all the works of his creation. He sees whatever feed he puts into the ground, it produces the same kind; and in the hope of this he sows his wheat, his barley, and his other grain, each in its season; always depend

depending on this regularity, which never fails to give the kind of produce he expects.——Let him stop a moment, and ask himself, whether he thinks it possible, that every thing could be preserved in this regular order, if the affairs of the world were not governed by an all-powerful God? Chance could not possibly produce so much regularity.

But now, tho God by all this regularity convinces mankind, that he over-rules the world; yet we are reminded also of our dependence upon him by various instances. The husbandman above all others, has this great truth continually before his eyes. He sees it is not by his own care, and prudence, that the season is favourable; or the crop abundant. He sees, he cannot command rain, or sunshine, as he thinks best. He sees the year is often more rainy; and often more parched, than he could wish. For all this, he must depend solely on God. From hence therefore he should learn a thankful acknowledgment to his maker, for all the good he receives; and should take the bad as intended to check his setting his heart on the things of the world; and as those means of trial, which he ought to improve by patience, and resignation.

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There are other religious truths, which the husbandman is particularly in the way of observing. He cannot turn up a clod of earth, without being reminded of his beginning and his end. *Dust thou art: and unto dust shalt thou return.* The very worm that crawls beneath his plough, tells him that *his flesh shall see corruption*; and that *worms shall destroy his body.*—But there is one great truth, which I cannot help dwelling a little more upon; and that is the strong representation, which every part of nature, and especially the growth of corn, holds out, of the resurrection of the dead. The year dies away in the winter. All things are inanimate. The ground is without herbage; the tree without leaves. Nothing can give a more exact picture of death; and they, who should see all this desolation, without being acquainted with the change of seasons, would conclude, that the world had now little longer to last. But at the approach of spring all this appearance of death goes off. The grass grows; the leaves shoot; and the forest revives with new beauty. What a strong emblem is this of a resurrection from the dead! But it is still held out more strongly in corn; which is buried in the ground; where it rots, and dies. But there is a principle of life in it, which rises again, and opens

opens into a ten-fold improvement. The tree, which revives in the spring, receives but little addition to its growth. It is not therefore so just an emblem of the resurrection from the dead, as a grain of corn, which receives after its death so great an increase. It was this part of the resemblance, which so particularly struck St. Paul : *It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power. So also is the resurrection of the dead.*

Thus, my brethren, I have explained to you in a variety of instances, the instruction you may receive from the culture of the ground. If you have not time to read your bibles so much as you ought, you see, you may reap instruction, while you pursue your daily labour. Our blessed Saviour, you know, spoke in parables ; which is, in other words, instructing us from the things we see around us : and there is no doubt, but God almighty hath, for our sakes, mixed instruction with the things of this world ; that we may always have before us the means of improvement. *Doth God take care for oxen ?* the apostle asks, *or saith he altogether for our sakes ? For our sakes, no doubt*

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this is written: that, as it follows in the words of the text, he that plougheth, should plough in hope; and he that thraſheth, should be partaker of his hope.

That we may all correct our faults, and improve ourselves by every mean of instruction that is offered, whether more directly in the bible: or more obscurely in the field, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through the assistance of his holy spirit!

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

JOHN 19. XXX.

IT IS FINISHED.

THIS affecting expression at the close of our blessed Saviour's life, was the conclusion, as it were, of the grand scheme of the redemption of mankind. *It is finished*, said the holy sufferer; *and bowing his head, gave up the ghost.*

In contemplating these awful words, I shall shew you *first*, what Christ *finished* for our sake—and *secondly*, what we ought to finish for his.

With regard to what Christ *finished*, in the first place, the prophecies respecting the Messiah were

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completed.—Those which predicted his miraculous birth—his bringing salvation to all mankind—the miracles he wrought—the manner of his death—and his being made an offering, and atonement for sin—were all now fulfilled. The completion of this great work the holy Jesus had particularly in view, when he cried out, as he expired, *It is finished.*

Then also the types, and ceremonies, particularly the sacrifices of the Jewish law, were fulfilled. The devout jew, no doubt, often felt himself at a loss for the meaning of these mysterious rites; and so he was too pious to question their propriety, as they had been appointed by God himself; yet he could not but wish to have a more perfect insight into their hidden meaning. All this darkness was now dispelled, when the blessed Jesus from the cross declared, that all *was finished.* Then was seen the propriety of those mystical representations—the various sacrifices of the law—the passover—the paschal lamb—the high-priest entering the holy of holies—and all the other parts of the Jewish ritual.

Again, the sufferings of the Messiah were now *finished.* In what those mysterious sufferings consisted—what was the extent of them—and whether

ther, severely as they affected the body, they did not still more severely affect the mind, we know not. It is certain they were very acute. *No man's sorrows*, we are assured, *were like his sorrows*. A painful life---great part of which had been spent in poverty and labour; was closed in torment, and cruel anguish. But all was now over. The holy sufferer bowing his head, and crying, *It is finished*, gave up the ghost.---To this great event was afterwards added Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead.

These great works the Messiah *finished* to give evidence to the truth of the grand scheme, in which he had engaged.---With regard to the great works, *he finished*, in which man was more immediately concerned, we may mention first his opening the gospel to all mankind. We suppose indeed, that all, who before the coming of Christ lived up to the lights they had received were saved through his merits, tho the great atonement was not yet made. But now all had the means offered them of holier living, than they had before: and these means were to be extended---and we have no doubt, will, in due time, be extended---to all the nations upon earth. The Jewish government had performed its office, in being

as the apostle says, *our Schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*. It's services therefore were no longer wanted. This great event then of offering the gospel freely to all mankind, no doubt, the blessed Jesus had in view, when he declared from the cross, that all *was finished*.

Another great work, which our blessed Saviour *finished*, was to give us a compleat rule of life---the means of observing that rule, through the assistance of God's holy spirit---together with a perfect example of piety, and virtue. To the *example*, we always find him as attentive as to the *precept*. He has instructed his disciples in no virtue, of which he has not also given a pattern in himself: and the precept, and the example together, make that rule of conduct, which is to direct the christian life. The completion of this great work also was no doubt, included in his dying words, *It is finished*.

But the grand work of redemption, which Christ perfected for man, was his enabling him to triumph over death, and the grave, by making that atonement for his sins, which he could never have made for himself. In what mysterious way the death of Christ atones for the sins of mankind, we know not---nor does it become us to enquire. If

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we believe the scriptures, we must also believe, that had it not been for this wonderful instance of love, in whatever way accepted by the Almighty, we should have had nothing to stand between our guilt, and God's displeasure; and had been left without the least hope of everlasting happiness.

Having thus briefly seen the work, which our blessed Saviour *finished* for our sake, let us now see, as I proposed *secondly*, what we are to *finish* for his.

It was the great intention of the gospel to restore mankind, as much as possible, to that purity, and innocence, in which our first parents were created. If they had continued to live in that happy state, they would not have wanted a Saviour. It seems therefore to follow, that to bring us again as nearly as possible to that holy state, was the great design of our Saviour's coming into the world. Faith in him, is the *mean*, by which we obey the gospel. The great point therefore before us is a holy life. At the same time, as it is impossible for man, in his present depravity, to attain that height of perfection, which our first parents lost, our blessed Saviour's death was to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. It obtains

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for us that pardon for our repented sins, which *after our best endeavours*, we all want. It is still however expected, that we should do all we can. As heaven is opened to our view, we are taught to consider this world only as a passage to it--a state of preparation to fit and qualify us for it.

It is not however supposed, that we are to live in this world; as if we had no connection with it. God certainly intends, that we should be industrious, and careful, and provide for our families. All he enjoins is, that we should do this innocently, and moderately---that we should mix the great business of religion with the less concerning business of life--that while we provide for our bodies, we should provide also for our souls--that in the comparison we should rate the former as nothing--that while we serve ourselves, we should not injure others--that we should look up to God, as the giver of every thing we enjoy; and serve him with gratitude for all his goodness. Under these restrictions, it is certainly allowable for a christian to be concerned about the things of this world.

But now, tho we are to consider ourselves thus as connected with the world, we are, at the same time, to consider the world as an enemy, which we must oppose on every side. As it is meant for a

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state of trial, as well as an habitation, it abounds with circumstances of every kind, good and bad. Some people are tempted with riches, and some with poverty—some with high stations, and some with low; and we are instructed to consider every state as our means of trial, and turn it to our future advantage.

But the temptations which the world furnishes, would be of little consequence, if we had not within ourselves appetites, and passions corresponding with them. Now all these appetites, and passions are highly useful in themselves, and admirably fitted to the state, *in which we live*. But as they are all liable to great excesses; and as this tendency to excess, becomes our temptation, and means of trial, we must watch over them, and strictly endeavour to keep them within the bounds of religion. Thus in every thing there is the use, and the abuse. In all our passions—in all our appetites—in eating and drinking—in sleep—in amusements—in every thing else, there is a due end—that end for which God almighty intended each—and there is likewise the faulty extreme. In what that due end consists, the holy scripture honestly interpreted, will easily shew us. All beyond that point is sin, however the fashions of the world

world may seduce us often to think it innocent.--- Our thoughts too as well as our passions, and appetites are great seducers. They are apt to run on follies, and vanities, if not on wickedness. These too should be well governed, and kept in order: and the more so, as from the quickness, with which they enter the mind, it is difficult to guard against them. An *action* is perfected deliberately; and gives room for recollection, during the completion of it. But thought is instantaneous; and must be watched at the very entrance.---In short, there is nothing in the world, either within, or without ourselves, which does not seem intended as the means of trial, and from which we may not derive either good, or bad.

Now the great work, my brethren, which we have to *finish*, is to pass religiously through this world of temptation---to separate the good from the bad---and to improve ourselves in religious habits, from every circumstance, that can happen---from prosperity---from adversity---from health---from sickness---from sorrow---from joy---from good usage, and bad usage---the kindness of friends, and the malice of enemies---in short, to make every circumstance the occasion of either

praise—or thanksgiving—or gratitude to the great giver of all things—or of forbearance—or resignation—or the better ordering of some passion. And all this we are well enabled to do by the precepts of the gospel, founded on faith, and trust in our blessed Redeemer—on devout prayer, and the assistance of God's holy spirit.

And now, my brethren, it behoves us all to consider, whether we have properly performed this great work, which we are thus appointed to *finish*. We are all on our passage to eternity. We shall all soon come to the end of our course in this world, and be under a necessity to say of the work we leave behind, of whatever nature, *It is finished*. *Finished* it must be, in some shape. It is our parts to see how.——As to the prodigate, and abandoned, who spend their lives in a continued course of wickedness, who go on without any reflection of what is to come, we must leave them I fear, to *finish their* work in their own miserable way.

But now, my brethren, there are many, who would pass in the world for decent christians, and yet think very little of the great work, which they have to *finish*. What shall we say of him, whose *chief concern* in this world hath been the busi-

business of it? who hath toiled through life, after his profession—his trade—his farm—or whatever his business hath been? I have led a busy life, he cries: I have greatly improved my fortune. I began the world with little; but now few in my station have done better.—And who finds fault with you for laying yourself out industriously on any of these employments? It is right, and fit you should.—But still the gospel asks you, Is this *all* the work you have *finished*? Have you left every thing relating to another world *unfinished*? Among all the works, which you have *finished*, have you *finished* nothing for your soul's sake? —Have you taken no pains to instruct yourself in the principles of your religion?—Have you never inquired into its evidences? Have you left all to chance; and are a christian only by rote?—If you can give no answer to these questions, it is a pity your time has been so intirely taken up with your profession, your trade, or your farm. They will soon be at an end?—and then——Surely this point deserves consideration.

Again, what shall we say of that man, whose *chief concern* in this world hath been the pleasures, and amusements of it.—He hath kept clear indeed of any great vice; but hath seen year after year

year pass over him in the same thoughtless manner—one idle amusement following another—and every day spent first in contriving some new amusement, and then in enjoying it. When such pleasureable men come to the close of life; and say, as they must say, *It is finished*; What, they may be asked, is *finished*? The feast---the dance---the joyous meeting are all now over.---And yet still there is no harm in these things, if they have been taken with innocence, moderation, and without interfering with things of consequence. In the excess lies the mischief: But what numbers are there who take them in the excess? Alas we are gentle censurers of ourselves. We allow a great deal to amusement, with a quiet—a very quiet conscience. A taste for pleasure is strong; and can easily answer all the objections that religion makes to its excess.—But a time will come, when these objections will rise with a strength, that cannot be resisted. At the close of life, when all is *finished*, we may ask ourselves, or however, at a later period, it will be asked, What is *finished*? Was a well-spent life *finished*? Was any good done to make that life remembered? Were any habits of virtue formed? Any heavenly affections gained? Were the good things of this world

world never abused to any sinful purpose? Did you make a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness by considering yourself as the steward of God's blessings; and laying out the overplus on your suffering neighbours? Have any of these things been *finished*?—If not, remember the close of such a life as yours. It is affectingly told in the account we have of one, who laid up his goods for many years; and thought of *finishing* nothing but a life of pleasure, saying to his soul, *Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.*—Here the life and death of the person who had *finished* nothing but a life of pleasure, *follow close together*; and are therefore the more affecting. In real life, the days of pleasure; and the fatal account at the end, are often *lengthened into wider space*; and therefore affect us not so strongly. But the cases otherwise are exactly the same.—Remember him also, who left all *unfinished*, but the gratifications of the world—whose only concern was to clothe himself with *purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day.* Recollect his doom: *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things—that is, all the good things thou ever thoughtest about—Now thou art tormented.*

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These examples, my brethren, were recorded for our use. Let us receive them as such; and always bear in mind, the *insignificance* with which such characters pass through this world; and the *guilt*, with which they enter the next.

How different is that noble apostolic exultation, to which with all humility we should look up: *The time of my departure is at hand. I have sought a good fight—I have kept the faith—I have finished my course. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day.*

SERMON XXII.

JOHN 5. XXVIII.

THE HOUR IS COMING, IN THE WHICH ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVE SHALL HEAR HIS VOICE; AND SHALL COME FORTH: THEY THAT HAVE DONE GOOD, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF LIFE; AND THEY THAT HAVE DONE EVIL, UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF DAMNATION.

THE histories of this world are filled with the lives, and actions of men while they continue on earth: and it may be an *amusement* at least, to read of those celebrated persons, who have distinguished themselves by their knowledge—by their political wisdom—or by their great achievements. But all these histories of the famous dead, are confined within the compass of a few years. Each busy life concludes in the grave.

But

But the awful passage I have just read to you, is history of a different kind. It takes up the history of man, where the worldly historian leaves him. Here the history commences after death. Here we are told what are the transactions, in which we shall be engaged after our bodies lie down in the dust; when we shall be called out to live—not through the few fleeting years of a mortal life—but through the expanse of eternity. Here too is contained not only the history of others, but of ourselves. However low we are, we shall figure in this history. For here the splendid actions, and partial distinctions of mankind are all lost. The inhabitant of the palace, and of the cottage, are equally concerned. The peasant, and the monarch make a figure in this history equally conspicuous.—Let us then turn over this awful page with fear, and trembling. Let it impress us all with its vast and amazing contents—but let it chiefly impress the proud man with this instructive lesson, that he will now find all the objects of his scorn on an equality with himself.

The first expression, that demands our attention, is the solemn introduction. *The hour is coming.*

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One of the shortest periods of time is mentioned, to shew, how speedily, (as far as we ourselves are concerned) God would have us suppose these great events will take place. We are not told the *year* is coming---or the *day* is coming: but the *hour* is coming; which intimates to us, that we should accustom ourselves to measure our lives by the shortest span. The longest life is divided into *hours*, which soon fleet away one after another. It appears indeed the intention of God, through every part of his revealed will, to inculcate upon us, and recommend to our constant consideration---the shortness of a mortal life. All the images by which it is represented in scripture, are of the decaying, transitory kind. It is grass, that withereth---it is a flower, which fadeth---it is a vapour which vanisheth.---The meaning of all which images, is, that God would remove from us all ideas of considering this world as our home; and therefore, in his holy revelation he always represents it as short. All these images therefore of vanishing time are lessons of mortality. They proclaim the *hour is coming*, which will put a short period to every thing here.---Consider therefore this short period in the light only of time *lent* to you; and consider for what purposes it is *lent*:---that each fleeting hour may

may be estimated as a portion of that time, which is to lead you to a happy eternity. Let us not then suffer our hours to fleet past us, one after another, unnoticed. In all cases an hour may be improved—in some it may be of the first importance. When we talk therefore of the shortness of an hour, we mean not to depreciate its value. If we neglect our hours, we can have no value for our time.

But let us proceed in this awful history of the dead; and see what is to ensue, *when the hour cometh*. St. Peter introduces the scene with wonderful grandeur.—*The day of the Lord will come, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up.*—Then, as the text tells us *all who are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth*.

The passage *all who are in the grave*, seems immediately to refer to the resurrection of the body—a doctrine, which the gospel very plainly inculcates.—Where our *souls* take their flight, when our bodies lye down in the dust, till the general resurrection, is a question, which hath much employed the conjectures of mankind. Some have supposed them

them to remain in a state of sleep, till that time; and that, as we read *a thousand years are with God, only as one day*, a person may die and yet his soul may awaken as it were, instantaneously into judgment, tho' ages may have passed between his death and resurrection. Others again have thought, that the soul immediately enters a state of happiness, or misery; tho' it may not experience so full a degree of either, as after the judgment of the great day: while others have supposed it to remain in some middle state.--After all, it is best to refer such curious questions to a future time. If God had thought it necessary for us to have been acquainted with them, he would have revealed them plainly. It seems however to be the decisive doctrine of scripture, that whatever may be the immediate state of our souls, our bodies, in some spiritualized form which we understand not, shall be again united to them. And in some parts of scripture a reason seems to be given, that as the soul and body had sinned or acted uprightly together in this world; they might in the next be united, in reward, or punishment. As to the difficulty of gathering up all the particles of human bodies, however dispersed through air, earth, or sea, and other difficulties with regard to the fluctuation of parts, and sameness

ness of each body; they can only be difficulties with those, who have not properly considered the omnipotence of that God, who originally created man out of dust, and can no doubt as easily restore him.——The expression therefore *all who are in the grave*, seems to include all who are dead; and when the *hour cometh*, this union of soul and body will take place.

This is an hour indeed of awful visitation to all---of dreadful visitation to numbers. *All who are in the grave, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. Come forth* they must: but with what different feelings! *When the hour cometh*, and that awful voice, *Come forth*, shall sound through the regions of the dead; how, think you, will the guilty sinner appear; who has led his life in all the corruptions, and wickedness of the world? How will his spirit sink within him, when the very grave itself can no longer afford him refuge; when his many sins, which had always been thrown behind his remembrance, now rise to his conscience, with every circumstance of recollected guilt? Then shall be completely fulfilled that pathetic prophecy, which our blessed Saviour pronounced over Jerusalem; and which had reference, probably to the end of the world, when he tells the guilty, he should on that day, call

call on *the mountains to hide him; and on the hills to cover him.* It must not be. Neither hills, nor mountains can hide him. He *must* come forth. Dragging all his guilt after him, he *must* appear in the presence of his judge.

How different will be the feelings of him, who has led his life on earth, in obedience to God's laws! Full of trust in his Saviour's mercy; full of holy joy, and conscious innocence, the awful voice, *Come forth,* is to him a joyful voice. It thrills through him, like the messenger of the best news he ever heard. "I come, I come, my blessed Redeemer: I hear thy voice, I run to meet thy summons; humbly hoping, that my poor endeavours offered up through thy all-sufficient merits, will procure me pardon before the throne of grace."

This is the first grand scene, which the text exhibits---all nations of the earth thus summoned, in one vast assembly, before their judge. The pride of wealth will be brought low; and the humility of the poor exalted. Good and bad will make the only distinction among the children of men.

Then will commence the general enquiry. Our thoughts, our actions, even our *idle words*, that is, such words, as shew our own corrupt hearts, or tend

tend to corrupt others; we are assured, will all be examined. Many a person, no doubt, whose hypocrisy and guile, in this world, might have thrown a veil over his real character, will then be brought to light---sin after sin will be added to the account---no need of witnesses---his own guilty conscience will itself bear witness to the truth of every accusation.

Sins, more or less, we all have to answer for. Happy will they be in that day, whose sins, how great soever, have on a sincere repentance, been washed away in the blood of Christ. When the new life begins, the old one is forgotten in the sight of God. But if our repentance during the term of God's mercy on earth, had not been sincere; ill shall we abide the enquiry of that day---that day, which will bring the sincerity not only of our actions, but of our *motives* to the strictest test.

After the general enquiry, the awful history proceeds to open the last, and most affecting scene. *They that have done good, shall rise to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.*---All must rise---all must rise to everlasting life: but how different their doom!

In what the rewards of the blessed shall consist, we know not. We may conjecture; but can receive information only from the holy scriptures. There indeed we are told a few circumstances, and only a few, of that blessed state. It seems rather the intention of God, to make heaven the object of our faith, than of our conception. We ought to trust God for our happiness hereafter, who hath given us so many blessings here—and believe that he will not carry us from a better place to a worse; but from a worse to a better.—They *who have done good* therefore trusting in the merits of their blessed Saviour, will hope for every thing *happy in the resurrection of life*. While they, *who have done evil*, have every thing to fear from the *resurrection to damnation*.

In what the punishment of the wicked consists, we know as little as we do of the rewards of the righteous. But from the strong expressions, in which it is mentioned in scripture—it is certainly a desperate piece of folly to run the risk of gaining such dangerous knowledge by experience.

Thus, my brethren, I have considered the several parts of the text, which contains, as I suggested to you, the history of mankind, after all other histories

cease---the history of those events in which we must all be concerned, when the world vanishes away---when the grave gives up its dead---and there is an end of all the labours of mortal man. I have not you see endeavoured to work upon your imagination by any fanciful description. Every thing of that kind would lower the subject. The plainest comment is the best. If there were any reason to surmise, that these awful words were dictated by enthusiasm---invented by fraud---or were the language of superstition---a life of pleasure might have some apology. But when we are assured they are revealed from heaven---when we can prove by the strongest evidence (if wicked men would attend to it) that the scriptures, in which they are found, were written by those holy men, whose names they bear---the disciples of the blessed Jesus---one should imagine they would strike terror into the hardest heart. Why they do not, let those explain, who prefer supposition to truth, and a jest to an argument. In the mean time till it be explained, let us not cease to wonder, how it comes to pass, that any one can calmly enjoy the pleasures of sin, when he may have the force even of demonstration to assure him, that

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he who hath done evil shall rise to the resurrection of damnation.

Let us rather cry out with the apostle, *what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?* In a few years at longest, we shall all be, what we have made ourselves here---sealed up, as it were, for eternity: when the righteous shall join the spirits of just men made perfect---when all the vanities of life---its follies and its crimes shall be removed---when we need no longer be cautious, and reserved in our words, and actions---when truth and sincerity shall universally prevail---and when love, and innocence, and purity of manners shall make all the inhabitants of the regions of the blessed, happy in themselves, and in each other.

For that joyful time let us devoutly wait---blessing God's holy name for all his servants departed this life in his faith, and fear; and beseeching him to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of his heavenly Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and only mediator, and advocate.

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SERMON XXIII.

1 THESSALONIANS 5. XVI.

REJOICE EVERMORE.

THIS is a singular piece of instruction, says the objector, as it is directly contrary to various precepts of the gospel, and particularly to one of Christ's direct instructions, which pronounces a blessing on *those that mourn*. Whereas the apostle enjoins us not only to *rejoice*; but to make this joy continual.

In the following discourse I shall endeavour to rid the apostle's precept of this difficulty; and then shew you, that a christian may *rejoice evermore*.

Now

Now in order to reconcile our Saviour's precept, *Blessed are they, who mourn*, with the text, which orders us to *rejoice evermore*, we have only to inquire, what our Saviour means by *mourning*, and what St. Paul means by *rejoicing*. By *rejoicing* the apostle certainly means something very different from what the world calls *rejoicing*. None of the things of this world, it is evident, can, in any sense, be said to make a man *rejoice evermore*. The things of this world, while we continue in it, must be fought after in a certain degree; and the innocent amusements of it are kindly allowed us to sweeten our toil. But the apostle certainly never meant to recommend any of these things, as the means of *rejoicing evermore*. Merely in *themselves*, and independent of all religious connection, the things of this world can furnish only that kind of *rejoicing*, of which the apostle elsewhere speaks, when he tells us, that *our laughter shall be turned into heaviness, and our joy into mourning*.

What then does the apostle mean? What kind of rejoicing is this, which a man may be enabled to enjoy as long as he lives? which nothing can take from him---which he carries with him into the next world---which lasts *for evermore*.

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Let us call on the apostle to explain himself. In other parts of his writings he does it fully : and plainly shews us, that the *rejoicing* he speaks of, must arise from our connection with the *next* world, not with *this*. *Our rejoicing*, says he, in one place, *is this, the testimony of a good conscience*; and in another he bids us, when we rejoice *to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God*.—So that the apostle's rule, you see, has no relation to any *external rejoicing*, which arises from worldly things. His *rejoicing is internal*, founded entirely on the *hopes* of that happiness, which we are to receive hereafter ; from a good life, and the *testimony of a good conscience* : these through Christ, are the means of our obtaining this happiness.

As to *worldly rejoicing*, no one knew so little of it as the apostle himself. His life seems to have been a life of mourning, from one end of his ministry to the other. Nay, in one place he tells us plainly, *he had continual sorrow in his heart*. And yet, at the same time, he could follow his own rule, and *rejoice evermore*.

Let us now see what our Saviour means when he bids us *mourn*. He certainly does not speak of such *mourning* as arises from the afflictions of the world. This sort of mourning is natural ; and will

will at certain times be the lot of us all : so that there was no occasion for the gospel to teach it. The gospel was, in its nature, intended to oppose the ideas of this world—to be a balance against them—to be continually drawing us a different way—to spiritualize our ideas—to call us to an attention to our souls, rather than our bodies. The blessedness therefore which our Saviour pronounces on mourning, was only on such mourning, as consists in seriously lamenting our sins; and in strenuously denying ourselves many of those pleasures, which the world is apt to consider among its greatest means of rejoicing. This kind of mourning our Saviour elsewhere expresses by the phrases of *cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye* : and is that kind of *godly sorrow*, which St. Paul tells us, *worketh repentance ; while the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

Now it is evident, that our Saviour's *mourning* is intended to lead directly to St. Paul's *rejoicing*. The end of it is to qualify, and prepare the mind by its spiritual discipline, for more happiness, than we could possibly receive from all the possessions of this world. *Blessed are ye that mourn—for ye shall be comforted.*—Where ? Not in this world ;

world; but in the next; or, in St. Paul's words, ye shall *rejoice evermore*.

We have here therefore a clear solution of all the difficulties of the question; and find our Saviour, and his apostles speaking exactly the same language. Both wish to take the hearts of their converts from worldly things; and to fix them as much as possible, on spiritual things. But one mentions the cause; the other the effect. St. Paul considers mourning as the *means* of rejoicing: our Saviour considers rejoicing, as the *end* of mourning. In plain language he tells his disciples, that in the world, they should have tribulation; but their sorrow should be turned into joy.

And indeed the apostle himself, in another passage, as if aware, that some misconstruction might be put on his applying the word *rejoicing* in a sense so contrary to the common acceptance of the word, shews us, that the same apparently contradictory way of speaking may be applied to many other gospel truths, as well as to that of rejoicing. The true christian, says he *may be a deceiver*—that is, he may appear a deceiver to the world—and yet be true: he may be as unknown; yet well known: he may be as poor; yet making many rich: as having nothing; and yet possessing

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all things : and finally, among other seeming contradictions, he may *be as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing* :—that is however he may be judged by the world, as a melancholy, and joyless man, he has those sources of happiness within himself, which, tho the world can form no estimate of them, are sufficient to make him *rejoice evermore*.

Having thus, I hope, explained the apostle's meaning; and reconciled it with our blessed Saviour's precept; let us now bring the doctrine to proof; and see how far a christian may be enabled to *rejoice evermore*.

Most people, I apprehend, will be inclined to allow, that a rich christian in good circumstances, abounding in all the plenty of this world, may *rejoice evermore*.—And so he may. Why not? His riches and plenty need not surely prevent his *rejoicing*; tho they cannot be the cause of it. But then we must take it for granted, that this rich christian is a good *christian also*.—we must take it for granted, that he does not depend on his riches for happiness; but like other good christians, on the *testimony of a good conscience*, and the *hope of the glory of God*. His riches alone cannot be the foundation of his *rejoicing evermore*.

evermore. His wealth unsupported by religion, will produce humours and follies, and vices, which will prey upon him; and will be sure to create him unhappiness enough. But if he be a *real christian*, the good things of this world will not have this pernicious effect: they will never make him proud, and insolent. They will never deprave, and corrupt his mind. He will feel no distresses about keeping, or increasing, his stores: no anxieties, and depressing cares. He will consider his wealth, as a burden, and trust laid on him, of which he is to make the best use. He himself is only the channel, through which it flows—not in the indulgence of his own follies, and vanities, but in what he conceives to be its most useful purposes. Of all this, he knows, he is to render a strict account.—Such a christian, tho in the midst of abundance, no doubt, may *rejoice evermore.*

To prove however that a rich christian may *rejoice evermore*, you will not perhaps think requires many words. But whether a christian, deprived of all *worldly means* of happiness, may *rejoice evermore*, will seem a much harder question to decide.

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Let us however state his case fairly, and see what religion will do for him. That the thing is possible is certain. We have many instances, sufficiently proved, of christians who have borne with cheerfulness even the extremest torments. *They were stoned—they were slain with the sword—being destitute, afflicted, tormented—not accepting deliverance,* (that is on the terms, the world offered it) *that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

Now here you see instances of people, who have not only borne with cheerfulness poverty, and want—but such horrid cruelties, as nature shrinks at.

And think you not, that the same cause, which enabled them to bear with cheerfulness such dreadful sufferings, might at least enable you to bear the common evils of life? They had nothing to support *them* but what every good christian may now possess—the all-powerful grace of God, which assists every man, who has the *testimony of a good conscience, and the hope of the glory of God.*

Many of you, besides your poverty, may have sickness in your families: in hard times you may find it difficult perhaps to supply your daily wants. And these are trials, no doubt. Yet still here is nothing of extraordinary difficulty: nothing like

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the terrible sufferings, which I have just told you many have undergone with perfect resignation to God's will—nay even with cheerfulness itself. If you cannot bear the common evils of life; how, think you, could you bear those extraordinary sufferings, if it should please God to call you to them? If it should please God to call you, as he did the early christians, to give up your lives, by some cruel sufferings for the sake of your religion; how do you think, you could bear such a trial as that? But the evils, which fall to your share, are much more supportable. At worst, God has only called you to bear the difficulties of a low station in life. Take then the apostle's advice. Be not melancholy, and cast down; but contented, and cheerful. Endeavour to have always *the testimony of a good conscience*; and the *hope of the glory of God*; and try whether this will not enable the poorest of you to bear with cheerfulness your lot in life.

Cast up the accounts. Examine first how many causes of distress the good christian may prevent. A good christian lives at peace with his neighbour; and does injury to no man. Of course he can have no quarrels, and contentions to inflame him—no boisterous passions to ruffle him—no spite and

and malice to keep him in constant agitation.—The good christian again, is resigned to his condition in life. Of course therefore he hath no discontent to fret; nor envy to sour; nor anxious care to disturb him.—He hath no perverse humours to throw his attention continually on some wrong object—he hath no inordinate appetites and affections to mislead him—nor wicked designs to disquiet him—nor fears to distress him—nor remorse, and stings of conscience to torment him. And if he feel none of these vicious distresses (which you know, it is the business of religion to remove) you see what a number of those causes of misery are cut off that render the generality of mankind unhappy.

Then again consider, besides the removal of all this misery, what an overflowing of comfort the good christian feels from his religion. In the first place, he has the satisfaction of thinking he hath done his duty to God—his neighbour, and himself. He humbly hopes he hath discharged his trust, however small it hath been, with an upright conscience, *as to the Lord, and not unto man.* He hath a sure trust therefore in God, whom he knows to be his friend and support; who will never forsake him in his poverty—who calms his mind by the

the assistance of his holy spirit; and forms it into a heavenly temper. Above all, he has a well-grounded hope in his Redeemer's death, that his sins shall be forgiven; and that a blessed immortality awaits him.

This blessed immortality he hath always before his eye—the joyous end of all his labours. To this he hath recourse in all his distresses. It lightens the difficulties of the world; and adds a cheerfulness even to poverty, and affliction.

And is there more in this, than we often see in the world? Suppose a person left heir to a great estate, with a noble house upon it, and all things fit for the full enjoyment of life. He has nothing to do, but to take possession. A few stages will carry him to it.—During his journey, how may we suppose his thoughts are employed? On his accommodations? No: he cares little about them. His inn is bad—the weather is bad—the roads are bad. It is of little consequence. He hardly thinks of such trifles. His mind is fully occupied with the grandeur he is going to possess; and leaves every thing else unnoticed.

It is surely no high compliment to the kingdom of heaven to suppose it may impress a man as much as a fine house. If his faith be as ardent in one case,

taste, as in the other, it will impress him infinitely more.

From these impressions he feels that inward joy, which makes him consider the difficulties he meets with on his journey as trifling. It was this inward joy, that made those worthies, of whom St. Paul speaks, *take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a greater and more enduring substance.* It was this inward joy, that inspired the heart of Stephen, under the pains of martyrdom, when he *looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw in ecstatic vision, the glory of God, and Jesus sitting at the right hand of God.*

But now, my brethren, tho it is evident from these instances, that the christian religion is able to throw this sweet-composure on the mind in all circumstances of life; yet experience shews us that it is a height of religion, which few only can attain. Some may have closer ties to the world than others, in beloved relations, whom they may fear to leave unprovided for, or children, whom they may leave uneducated. These things will naturally occupy the breasts of the best christians.—Others may be constitutionally more dull-hearted, and cannot raise their thoughts in so elevated a de-

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gree; and yet may still be pious christians. While again there may be weaknesses, and fears in the constitution of the best christians, which may in some measure abate their happiness, tho they may not interfere with their hopes.

Let us not however be discouraged. Let us endeavour to make ourselves as good christians as we can; and we shall surely feel in proportion the blessed effects of religion on our minds. The more religious we are, the nearer we shall approach that happy state, which is capable of making us *rejoice evermore*. The scripture is full of holy examples, and holy precepts to incite us. To these let us have constant recourse: above all, *looking unto Jesus, the author, and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

SERMON XXIV.

LUKE 16. XIX.

THERE WAS A CERTAIN RICH MAN, WHO WAS CLOATHED IN PURPLE AND FINE LINEN, AND FARED SUMPTUOUSLY EVERY DAY. AND THERE WAS A CERTAIN BEGGAR, NAMED LAZARUS, LAID AT HIS GATE, FULL OF SORES.



IT happened, as our blessed Saviour was discoursing to the people on the use of riches and the dangerous effects of covetousness, that some of the Pharisees were his hearers. These blind guides, attending merely to the temporal profits of their law ; and neither observing, nor wishing to observe, any relation, it had to spiri-

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tual matters, maintained, as one of their opinions—that riches were a sign of God's favour; and poverty, of his displeasure. Hearing the blessed Jesus therefore talk of wealth, as of no value in itself, but taking all its value from the use it was put to, they were offended, interrupting his discourse, and treating it with ridicule.

Jesus knowing their wicked hearts, rebuked them as they deserved; and returning to his former argument on the right use of riches; added a parable, which tho of general instruction, had a particular tendency to the case of his malicious hearers.

This was the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; in which our blessed Saviour gives us a short history of the life, and death of two persons in very different situations. One was furnished with all the good things, which riches could bestow. He was *cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day*. But, alas! his death was very different from his life. His riches could then do nothing for him. They procured him indeed a splendid funeral—that they could do for him—but while his body was conveying to the grave in all its funeral pomp; his soul, we read, was thrust into a place of torment.

Very

Very different was the case of the other person, represented in the parable. He had as little of the good things of this world, as any human being could have. But tho his life was wretched, his death was happy. His funeral indeed was no man's care: but his soul was conveyed by angels into Abraham's bosom.—Such were the circumstances of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The observations, which arise from it, shall be the subject of the following discourse.

The observation, which first strikes us is, that our Saviour considers riches and poverty, merely as they respect the next world. He generally treats the good things of this world, as below our notice. In conformity therefore to his usual practice, he here considers riches and poverty in a religious light; and shews us that the good or evil arising from these two circumstances of life, depends intirely on our own behaviour.—For riches and poverty have each their respective temptations. And if we happily oppose these temptations, and live up to our duty; either one, or the other, may, through the blessing of God, be the instrument of our future happiness.

The rich man is apt to be proud and confident and self-conceited, and insolent, and overbearing,

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and dissolute.—All this, without his own best endeavours, and the assistance of God's grace, falls out in a natural, and easy manner.

For, in the first place so much submission and court are continually paid to him, that he is apt to forget himself; and think he is superior to every body. From *having* more, is an easy step to suppose, he *deserves* more. Such notions soon breed contempt for others. This again leads him to be insolent, and overbearing. He cannot suffer contradiction. He begins to look upon himself as a kind of independent being. Instead of looking up to God, who gave him his riches, he trusts in them, and places his happiness in the advantages which they procure. All his joy, like that of the rich man in the parable, is placed in cloathing himself richly, in eating deliciously, or in some other sensual gratification.—Such a rich man has reason indeed to fear from the parable. *He has* had *his* good things certainly in this world: he fought no better: and he may justly dread punishment in the next.

On the other hand, if this rich man had been humble, and gentle to his inferiors; if he had not trusted in his riches; but trusted in that God who gave them to him, and could as easily de-

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SERMON XXIV.

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prive him of them; if he had not squandered them on his pleasures; but used them moderately himself; and made a generous use of them for the good purposes, which God intended—then his riches, so far from being the means of his condemnation, would have been a blessing to him.

Again, the poor man is greatly mistaken, if he believes he shall receive God's favour, and be carried into Abraham's bosom, *because he is a poor man*. Poverty itself is no recommendation to heaven. It is virtuous poverty, which is pleasing to God. Lazarus might have lain at the rich man's door in all his wretchedness; and have been no nearer the kingdom of heaven, than the rich man himself, if he had envied the rich man—*if he had murmured at heaven, and repined at his own lot*—or if he had taken dishonest means to ease his wants.——But *his* sentiments we may suppose, were of a different kind. He bowed under the hand of Providence. His lot in life was hard; but that gracious God, who knew better than he did, what was proper, had appointed it for him.——Yet tho his outward circumstances were wretched; he was not devoid of comfort. He had the heart-felt satisfaction of hoping, he

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acted faithfully the part, which God had assigned him. He could not indeed exercise acts of kindness to his fellow-creatures. He had no purse to distribute among them. He had no power to do them offices. *His* advice would never be esteemed. But he had a heart disposed to all goodness, if God had given him the power. Devout religion was the only virtue he could practise; and in the full exercise of this virtue, he submitted to the divine will; knowing he served a gracious master who would not forget his patient sufferings. This world would soon be over. *His* confidence was in the next.---Thus his suffering virtues procured him that favour from God, which active virtues procured those, who were more able. He found his confidence in heaven was not misplaced. His miserable life lasted not long. He laid down his afflictions in the quiet grave; and was carried triumphantly into Abraham's bosom.

This is the lesson then, which the parable before us is intended to teach---that if riches, and poverty be considered in their proper light, they should be considered only as the means of qualifying us for future happiness. The use we make of them is the test.

But now, my brethren, that I may adapt this

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parable more to your use, you must consider, that it is only a small part of mankind, that are either so rich, or so poor as the persons here described. The two extremes are taken, to shew the force of the comparison more strongly. Few only are able to *cloathe themselves in purple, and fine linen; and to fare sumptuously every day.* Few only, on the other hand, are so distressed, as to lye at the doors of the rich, destitute, and full of sores. The greater part of you are neither rich nor poor; but enjoy the different degrees of a middle state.—Of course therefore, you must guard against the excesses; and practise the virtues, of each station.

Most of you have some share of this world's goods; and if it be but a little, yet your hearts may be as much set upon that little, as if it were more. You may trust as much in that little for your happiness—you may be as anxious, and solicitous about it—you may think as seldom about God, and the salvation of your souls: and yet perhaps because you have only a little, you may not see that you are following the example of him, who was *cloathed in purple, and fine linen.*—But where is the difference, pray, if a man's heart be *intirely* taken up with the world, whether it be with a little of it, or a great deal? Each fills his heart.

Accustom

Accustom yourselves therefore sometimes to stop short in the midst of your busy lives; and consider, where all this tends. While you live in the world, no doubt, the things of the world are necessary; and must be the objects of your attention. But the question is, are they to engage your whole time? Is your salvation not to be taken into the account? Can the things of this world supply all your wants? Can they provide for your future happiness? If you *have* souls to be saved, should not you take them also into the account? At the lowest, you must allow your souls should be as *much* your concern as your bodies. You must *at least* consider them as *one half* of yourselves.—For their sake therefore mix religion with the things of this world; let your souls share in the benefit you receive from them; and let not the sensual part usurp all.—In short, be kind, and open hearted, and ready to communicate what little you have, with those who want it. And if your motive in giving be a desire to please, and obey God, you give a value to a trifle; while the rich man purchases only misery, with the whole mass of the *mammon of unrighteousness* at his command.

The rich man before us, in the parable, we may

may suppose to have been a wicked man in many respects; but the sin laid particularly to his charge, was his spending all he had upon himself; and suffering his poor brother to lye at his gate, hungry, and full of sores. Most of you, in some shape, can assist a poor neighbour. The *willing mind*, where it *really* lodges, will always *do what it can*. You have heard of the value, which on a certain occasion, was put on two mites, which make only a farthing.

On the other hand, tho you are all, thank God! above the station of the poor person represented in the parable, who lay at the rich man's gate; yet few of you are so much above it, as not to feel some of the inconveniences of a low station. Never--never---let the inconveniences you feel, if they were even greater than they are, mislead you. When you see others in a higher station than yours; and abounding in things, which you want, never envy them. Or when your wants are not supplied, as you could wish; do not grudge, and murmur at providence. Above all things never be tempted by dishonesty, or wickedness of any kind, to make your situation better than it is. But be content with what God Almighty gives you; and through industry and fr-

frugality, which are the two great virtues under God, you have to trust to, let your own little do.——And if distresses fall to your share---if it please God to lay his hand upon you in some sore affliction, be resigned, and gentle, trusting in God's providence to relieve you, in his own good time, by means, which he knows best how to administer. By thus acting, you turn poverty into religion. You become those poor, to whom the Almighty has promised his favour. You gain that blessed temper, which St. Paul expressively calls *the patient waiting for Christ*.——None of you can have more worldly distresses, than that holy apostle had. Yet all of you may have the means to bear them, which he had---faith and trust in God, and Christ; and humble hope in his mercies. It is a wretched thing, when a poor man makes himself first unhappy here; and then, by his wickedness makes himself miserable hereafter: but if by behaving religiously in his station, he gains a happy immortality; he will bless that poverty, which was the means of his happiness.

Let me then intreat you to believe, that neither riches, nor poverty are matters of such mighty con-

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consequence, as you are apt to imagine. It is the great business of the world indeed to acquire the one, and to avoid the other; and by having your ears and eyes continually filled with the splendor of wealth, you are apt to be misled.—But, if we weigh things in the only true balance, the scale of truth, what is the value of the greatest worldly possessions?—*Possessions* we should not call them: their *transitory nature* destroys their value. Do you now regret the loss of such little pastimes of your youth, as formerly gave you high delight? You think not of them. They are past, and totally forgotten. Just such are the pleasures of your riper years. They fly off; and others succeed, equally fugitive. Nothing is stable, but the joys of religion.

Of what value then, we ask again, are the greatest worldly possessions?—What matters it, if we think justly, how our poor bodies are treated?—whether they fare hardly, or sumptuously every day? whether they are clothed in purple, and fine linen; or in coarse apparel?—whether they are carried to their graves in pomp; or in obscurity? These are matters about which the world makes a mighty stir: but it is the part of the ministers of the gospel, to recal your thoughts frequently

quently from these things—to remind you, that in a few years all will be forgotten, like the days of your childhood; a different scene of things will soon take place—the great day of accounts approaches, when an inquiry will be made—not, who was rich, and who was poor—these are the inquiries of this world—but, what account the rich man can give of his wealth? whether he made mammon his friend; or left him to be his accuser? Again, whether the poor man behaved properly in his station?—whether he was contented with his humble lot; and resigned to God in all his distresses?—or whether he endeavoured to relieve his wants by any dishonest means?—These, my brethren, are the inquiries, that will be made at that great day.----God grant we may all be enabled through Jesus Christ to answer these questions as we ought; and that whether we are rich, or whether we are poor; whether we have had ten talents intrusted to us, or only one; we may each employ his trust in such a way, as to make *things temporal lead to things eternal*; and may all be received, after this world is over, with the happy Lazarus, into Abraham's bosom.

SERMON XXV.

PHILIPPIANS 3. iv.

THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSETH ALL UNDER-
STANDING, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS, AND

MINDS, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

THE apostle to the Philippians, having given his converts some excellent instructions, concludes his advice with this blessing; which is so expressive of every religious sentiment, that it hath generally been used in the church as the last benediction.

As you have perhaps oftener heard this blessing pronounced, than thoroughly considered it, I propose, in the following discourse to explain it

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to you. And *first*, I shall shew you, what is meant by the peace of God—*secondly*, how it may be said to pass all understanding—and *thirdly*, how it keeps our hearts, and minds, through Jesus Christ.

I am to shew you, *first*, what is meant by the peace of God.

The word *peace* implies every thing, that is kind, gentle, and friendly. In the quarrels of nations, when war rages in all its violence, we look up to peace, as the blessed end of its horrors. When faction dissolves the bands of society, and opposite parties are tearing each other in pieces, we implore the blessed aid of peace to reunite us.—And when families become scenes of strife and bitterness, it is peace only which restores them to the comforts of domestic life.

In all these lights we consider peace as one of the greatest of earthly blessings. No earthly blessing can well be enjoyed without it; and its influence is such, that it will often supply the place of other earthly blessings. *Better* (surely in the opinion of all people) *is, a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.*

But still the peace of God is something more than all

all this. So far we have only considered, what we may call the *peace of man*—that tendency, which peace hath to throw its sunshine over outward circumstances. But the *peace of God* enters the heart. When we speak therefore of the *peace of God*, we mean that holy joy, which transfuses itself through the soul of a good man, and is founded on a humble consciousness of living in a blessed communion with God. It is the excellency of such a peace, that a man may enjoy it amidst all the horrors of war, and faction. Nothing can take it from him—nor almost disturb it.

But we must consider, that this holy peace is not the attainment of a feeble endeavour. It must be united with the uniform practice of a religious life offered up to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

When a man has attained a sense of religion, which has subdued his other affections—when he gives up, or is ready to give up, if he were called upon, every thing for the sake of his religion—when he allows no indulgence, nor the temptations of any worldly enjoyment to interfere with his duty—when he can say, with pious Eli, in the midst of affliction, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*: or, with the holy apostle, *I have*

have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content---when he considers this world merely as a passage to eternity---when he sees all its evil, and all its good, pass by him with unconcern; heeding its accidents, or its flattering hopes, no more than the cloud, or sunshine of a summer-day.---In a word, when he has acquired a thorough trust, and hope in God through Christ; and considers him in all his trials, as his best friend, who will deliver him out of them, when he thinks it proper, conforming his own will in every thing to that of his great benefactor---then, and not till then, he hath perfectly acquired the peace of God: for till then, he depends in some degree, on other things; and does not depend entirely on God for his peace.

But now, my brethren, this is a very high state of religion---the highest that *can* be attained---it is the religion of apostles, and martyrs: and tho open to us all, yet is a higher state I doubt, than any of us can fully acquire. It is my duty however to point out to you the highest state of religion; and it is yours to go as near it as possible.---Tho we cannot qualify our minds sufficiently for the reception of the peace of God, yet that is no reason, why we should not endeavour after it, by every

every means in our power.—*Be ye perfect, says the text, as your father, which is in heaven is perfect.* Tho you cannot possibly attain the perfection enjoined; the scripture notwithstanding gives you the rule; and you are to obey it, as nearly as you can. We must not despair, tho we cannot reach the point we aim at: but must consider it as a point held out, to excite our constant progression. And of this we may be assured, that every degree of progression is a degree also of happiness.

Having thus shewn you, what is meant by the peace of God; let me next shew you, how it may be said to *pass all understanding*. Now this expression is capable of two senses. In the first place, it may describe barely and simply, the great excellence of the peace of God: as when we mean to say a thing is exceedingly great, we call it great beyond conception; or, as we might with equal propriety say, it passes all understanding. And this would be a good sense, if we had not a better. But I conceive this was not the apostle's meaning. I should rather suppose the apostle's meaning to be, that the peace of God implies such a holy impression on the mind, as cannot be the object of the understanding. It is not so much the understanding

standing that is concerned about it, as the heart. It is not to be understood by defining, and explaining, as in matters of human science; but by *feeling*. There are some things, which we understand by reasoning upon them. We can explain them ---we can shew how they differ, or agree with other things: in short, they come within the compass of our understanding; and our understanding is not at a loss to conceive them in every part.---But there are other things, of which no judgment can be formed by the use of our understanding. It would be absurd, for instance, to endeavour to explain by words, or reasoning, the nature of any particular taste; or of any particular sound. To have a clear conception of these things, a man must not reason about them; he must feel them. ---Now just as these things are to the senses, so is the peace of God to the soul. We may reason about it, as we please, and employ all the powers of our understanding: it is not to be gained by reasoning. I have endeavoured to shew you the meaning of the expression---and how the peace of God is to be acquired. But if you want to know more of this blessed inmate, and what its effects are on the mind, you must acquire them yourselves.---You must feel them.---The wise man, and the

the learned man may employ their wisdom, and their learning on these subjects; and if they employ nothing else, they will employ them to little purpose; while the pious, good man, who has not half their learning, nor half their understanding; will, in the simplicity of a devout heart, through the grace of God assisting his humble endeavours, obtain this holy knowledge at once. It animates him: it enlivens him: it gives him religious cheerfulness: it makes him, in the scripture language, *rejoice evermore*. He cannot indeed explain the nature of its operation on his soul; but what is better, he feels its effects.

I am, lastly, to shew you, how the peace of God *keeps our hearts, and minds, through Christ Jesus*. Here is a distinction, you see, between our *hearts*, and our *minds*; and I suppose the apostle did not mean to express one thing by two words. The *heart* and the *mind* are very capable of being distinguished. The *heart* is generally supposed to be the seat of virtue and vice---the *mind*, of wisdom and folly. Now the peace of God, we are told, secures both these great inlets of human happiness, or misery.

And first, it keeps our *hearts*. Here the good affections reign. Here love, and meekness, and humility, and charity, and every christian virtue, hath its residence. And here hatred, and envy, and malice, and lust, - and every evil affection domineers. Here the secret voice of praise and gratitude is raised to the Creator : and here all our evil thoughts enter, and are encouraged. Here all our good resolutions, and pious purposes are conceived ; and here all our wicked designs, and mischievous intentions are hatched, and matured. So that the heart of man, just as it is disposed, becomes either the seat of piety, and joy ; or the seat of wickedness and wretchedness. It is, in short, either the temple of God ; or the habitation of the devil. — It becomes the former when the peace of God has entered it. That blessed guest rules all the affections ; and keeps them steady to their duty. What can tempt that man into any notorious sin, who has conquered the world --- who considers it not as a home ; but as a passage --- whose hopes are in heaven, not on earth ---- and who is so far from doing a bad thing to gain its wealth, or its pleasures ; that he is very indifferent, whether he gains them at any rate.

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The worldly man will undoubtedly call such a person a wretch---a silly foul misfed by foolish notions.---The worldly man may say so.---The peace of God is past *his* understanding.---He may call it a foolish notion : but the righteous man feels it is a real possession.

Thus the peace of God keeps the *heart*. We are told it keeps the *mind* also ; which, as we have just observed, is commonly esteemed the seat of wisdom, and folly. But here we are not to suppose the peace of God bestows worldly wisdom. It does not pretend to make men wiser, or more acute in gaining worldly science. These are points, which the peace of God has nothing to do with. But there is a kind of folly, greatly more pernicious, which it shuts out. It does not teach us the worldly means, and thriving arts of gaining riches and honours ; but it does more, it gives us the wisdom to despise them---to hold them cheap ; and not worth our pursuit. It does not pretend to enlarge the understanding, and improve the faculties of the mind : in these things it leaves men as it found them : but it does more ; it gives them a clear view of their best interest, and of the best means of attaining it. All the vanity of life ; and all

the idle folly of expecting happiness from the things of this world, it totally subdues.

One thing more remains in explaining this part of the text. The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds; but we are told it keeps them only *through Jesus Christ*. If we think of gaining the peace of God through any other means, we are mistaken. We have no hope of gaining the pardon of our sins, through any other means, than the atoning blood of Christ. In it we have a promise of forgiveness; but in nothing else: and unless we are in a capacity of having our sins forgiven, and are well assured of the means of obtaining forgiveness, it is impossible for sinful creatures to feel the peace of God.

Thus I have endeavoured to explain to you this very comfortable text. I have shewn you what we mean by the peace of God---how it passes all understanding---and how it keeps our hearts, and minds through Jesus Christ.---What remains, but that we should endeavour to draw down this divine blessing upon ourselves? It is not, we see, a blessing, that belongs to the wife, or to the learned---much less to the rich, or to the powerful. God may give wisdom and abilities

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—he may give riches—he may give health and strength, sometimes to one, and sometimes to another : But in fact, what are these worldly blessings ? We put them off, like our cloaths, at the end of our short day. In the eye of our Almighty father they do not seem to be considered as blessings ; but as trials merely. One man is proved by riches ; and another by poverty.—But the peace of God is held out as a blessing to all. The rich man seeks it by making a right use of his riches ; and the poor man by bearing his poverty with contentment, and a religious resignation to the will of God. The man of learning seeks it by considering it as his best knowledge—and the unlettered man by considering it as the only knowledge he wishes to attain. All of us, in every station, may be assured, that, in a degree, at least, each may acquire it ; and every degree is an advance to happiness beyond what any thing in this world can bestow : and what above all things should incite our ardour to attain it as far as we can, it will not, like the things of this world fail us in our last extremity. It will ever be our comfort through life ; and in the hour of death, when every thing else deserts us, the peace of
 God

God will be most our comfort; and will give us a foretaste of those happy mansions; for which through its blessed influence we have here been prepared.

END OF THE SERMONS.



HINTS

FOR

SERMONS.

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SEYMONS

I.

—*Doing service, as to the Lord, and not to man.*—Ephesians 6. vii.

AMONG all the evils of life that of slavery is one of the hardest to bear. To be totally subject to the will of such a mischievous, capricious creature, as man, is certainly very grievous.

In compassion to this miserable part of the human species, the apostle St. Paul is frequent in his advice to them. He tells them in general, that he was not authorized to make any change in the civil establishments of mankind. All he could do for them was to administer topics of consolation. Many of them, no doubt—one, we know—he converted to christianity; and if he could not make them happy in one way, he did it in another.

Among christians the idea of service is changed; and (except in one instance, which is a disgrace to a christian legislature,) the servant is as free as his master. But tho the nature of service is changed; yet

yet still, as there *must be different ranks* among mankind, there *will be oppression and tyranny*. The gospel therefore has given us many precepts to enable us to bear the oppression of bad men with christian patience: and in this light I know of none more effectual to a well-disposed mind than the text; in which all mankind are taught to consider themselves as the members of one great family, under God. As in a private family there are different stations; so there are likewise in God's great family. And all people should make themselves satisfied with those stations, in which they are placed, by considering themselves as connected with a still greater master than their earthly one; and should look upon their stations, as *parts given them by God, rather than as employments under man*. And tho many of these employments may be hard, yet it is a consolation to those who suffer under them, that they have a great, and kind master in heaven, who beholds their patient sufferings with a tender eye.

The happiness, that would result under this great principle of *doing service as to the Lord, and not to man*, might be considered at large, both as it respects mankind, *in general and individually*.

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II.

—The lamb slain from the foundation of the world.—Revelations 13. viii.

THE fate of the world from the time of Adam to the time of Christ; and likewise of that infinite number of human beings, since that time, who have never heard of the gospel—has often excited the compassion of good christians. They have bewailed the everlasting perdition of so many millions of people. It is true, our Saviour gave a short answer to some, who made an inquiry about a matter of this kind. *Lord are there few that shall be saved?* Trouble not yourselves, said he, with the care of others. Leave them in the hands of a merciful God. But let it be your care to attend to what concerns yourselves.

Such passages however, as the text, of which there are several, seem to throw light enough upon this subject to give us all the satisfaction we want. We may be assured, that God will never punish man for what they cannot help: but will judge *without law, those, that have sinned without law.*

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The mind of man however is always agitated, Having gotten rid of one difficulty, it raises a second often upon the solution of the first.—If then all the unchristianized parts of the world, which live up to the lights they have received, shall be saved through the merits of Christ—what occasion is there to advance the gospel farther? That the great, and gracious atonement should be made at *some time*, we can easily conceive: but when it was made, was not all done, that was necessary to be done? If men may be saved as well through the merits of Christ in a state of nature, as in a state of grace; why should the apostles be so earnest in propagating the christian religion themselves, and in their injunctions to all succeeding ministers to follow their example?

This, I own, is more of a difficulty than the other; because this earnestness has the appearance, as if the souls of men were really concerned. I shall endeavour to solve it.

Some have endeavoured to solve it by supposing christians to receive, at the end of their labours, a greater reward than other men. I think we have no authority for taking upon us to portion out God almighty's favours. We are told indeed that *the dead in Christ, should rise first*. But such expressions

pressions are greatly too obscure to be the foundation of doctrines, at least of this arduous nature.

Others may say, that the purification of our lives is a great end gained. True; but as the end of this purification is to qualify us for future happiness—and as we have every reason to believe, that the future happiness of men in a state of nature, is already provided for through the great atonement—there does not yet appear to be an adequate end for the strict injunctions, which the apostles, and their successors, are laid under to preach, and propagate the gospel.

The Revelations of St. John give us the only key, that I know, to solve this difficulty.

In that book we have some very sublime descriptions—(full of obscurity indeed in the *detail*—but very intelligible in the *general import*) of the millennium—the heavenly Jerusalem—and reign of the saints. The absolute nature of the glorious state figured out by these lofty expressions, we know not: but we know enough to conclude, that some triumphant state is held out; in which the church of Christ will in some distant period, be established. Hitherto the church of Christ is in a very impure state. In all mixed

nations, where the gospel is professed, it is so mixed with the prejudices, and wickedness of the world, that its efficacy and effects are no where seen. Here, and there, a few *faithful witnesses* have always distinguished themselves amidst the corruption of the times. But the great mass of the world taken together, has always had in it much more of the reign of Satan, than of Christ.

Now supposing the benefit of the great atonement to have taken place immediately after the fall, it appears that God almighty has still farther views to open in the dispensation of the gospel; of which we are yet ignorant, except from the few-hints delivered by the sacred writers, especially by St. John, the clue of whose divine book, I am now following.

As it pleased God therefore that the world was several thousand years in preparing to receive the gospel at first, even mingled as it is with all the impurities, infused into it by the wickedness of men, we may suppose a long time also may be required to prepare for those great events, of which St John speaks. So that altho the future situation of such men as live up to the lights they have received, may be safe; yet the propagating and preserving the gospel alive in the world, all

and in all the vigour, of which this imperfect state of things is capable, may be necessary to bring about these farther designs of Providence. Thus as the jewish religion was formerly the means of preparing the world for the reception of the gospel; so the gospel, as it is now professed, may be a mean of preparation for those grand schemes, which are bringing forward in God almighty's plan.

There is not any thing in the whole revolution of this world's affairs---the rise, and fall of empires---or the convulsions, and catastrophes, which the shocks of nature are continually introducing, that bears the least degree of comparison, in point of grandeur, with the progress, and completion of the great scheme of christianity, as it is opened in the beginning of Genesis, and concluded at the end of the Revelations. Published, and introduced by prophecy, and the whole typical scenery, if I may so call it, of a people wonderfully separated from the rest of the world, to make preparation for it---it appears at length attended with all this heavenly apparatus. Utterly rejecting, and as it were disdaining the parade of this world, it is great in its simplicity---merely upheld by the hand of heaven in all its miraculous dispensations. It is offered to man, in its progress towards its ultimate end, to restore

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his nature, and spiritualize his affections. But man, in general, wedded to the world, despises its call. Still however it maintains its course; and in some instances preserves its purity. At length the doctrines of the gospel, spreading from east to west, and from north to south, all the world, as we have reason to believe, will become christian. Still however we suppose it mixed with its usual impurities; till at length, this vast mass by the over-ruling power of providence; and those secret means, of which we can form no idea, will purge itself pure.----Then the grand effects of the gospel will display themselves. An illustrious scene will open, in which the world, and all its views, and pageantry will be depressed; and heavenly truth shine out in all its splendor. The *glory of God*, and the *happiness of man*, will then be *united*.

We christians, who live in the infancy, as it *may be*, of the gospel, can have no idea of these splendid scenes. It hath pleased God however, in a small degree, to raise the curtain of futurity, and give us afar off a glimpse of these happy times to animate us still more in the glorious pursuit, both of securing our own happiness; and of
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being, as far as our influence extends, the favoured instruments of bringing forward this amazing scheme of glory.

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III.

If ye know these things, happy are ye, if ye do them, — John 13. xvii.

CONSIDER, first, the necessity of *knowing these things*; and secondly, the necessity of *doing them*.

In every art, trade, or profession we must first know what we are to do, before we can do it. It is so in religion: but, God be thanked, the *knowledge* of religion lies in a very narrow compass. Tho it take up time to learn an art, or profession, yet the lowest amongst us may easily obtain sufficient knowledge of religion, for all the purposes of life.

The great difficulty lies in the *second* point we are to consider---not in *knowing these things*, but in *doing them*. In every thing, as well as in religion, practice is the end of knowledge: without it knowledge is useless. But what is singular in religious *practice*, it is the best way of gaining religious *knowledge*. If you apply every little knowledge you gain, to practice; you will

will soon become a greater proficient in religious knowledge, than *if* you had applied yourself with the greatest attention to the knowledge of it, and left the practice of it out of the question. *If any man will do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*---Besides, we are not so liable to error in *practice*, as we are in *knowledge*. *Right and wrong* are much clearer ideas, than *truth, and falsehood*. A well-intentioned mind may be led into enthusiasm, or superstition; but cannot so easily be led into wickedness.

IV.

Stand in awe, and sin not.—Psalm 4. iv.

THE occasion, and primary intention of many of the psalms of David, are uncertain. It is of less moment however, as we may still apply to ourselves the instructive precepts, and noble strains of piety and devotion, with which they abound.

The psalm before us is of this kind. The occasion is obscure: the instruction, distinct, and manifold. I have chosen the fourth verse to discourse on, *Stand in awe, and sin not*: from which words I propose to shew you the several ways, in which *standing in awe* prevents sinning: and you may consider, as I go on, in which of these ways you yourselves are restrained.

There are some people indeed, whose wicked lives suffer no restraint---who *stand in awe* of nothing. These are totally excluded from the idea of the text.

There are others who *stand in some awe*—but it is only of the laws of the land. Tho they have no fear of God before their eyes, they stand dreadfully

fully in awe of prosecutions and imprisonments; and differ only from the others in possessing less hardness of temper.

Others again have still a little more to say for themselves, and but a little. They are under no temptation of committing open acts of violence, and therefore want no restraint of law. But they stand greatly *in awe* of the opinion of the world. Their character is their idol; and through an attention to this, they refrain from many wrong actions, which draw upon them the contempt of mankind. Thus, without any sense of religion, they assume the appearance of decent, moral men. Religion indeed we expect not from them: but their motive is so bad, that even their morality is worth little.

There is another set of men, who have more religion than any of the former---for they have religion enough to be afraid of damnation; tho not enough to take the proper steps to avoid it. They live in a continued strife between conscience, and indulgence. There is something like religion here. It occasions a struggle. How that struggle may end, is yet to be seen: at present, as it does not lead them to act on a right motive, it is of little value.

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The last set of men, who are included in the psalmist's text, are those, who, divested of all thoughts of future punishment, or of the opinion of the world, *stand in awe of God*, through a fear of offending him, It is fear in one sense; but it is accompanied with that *perfect love*, which, in another sense, *casteth out fear*.

Beloved,

V.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God—and it doth not yet appear what we shall be—but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him, as he is.—And every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—1 John 3. ii.

THE divine author of this passage, among a multitude of heavenly themes, which he has proposed to our contemplation, has not proposed one more full of wonderful, and affecting matter, than this. He sets before us our new birth, and inheritance—our hopes—our motives—and glorification, all together, in one point of view.—Let us follow him through the particulars of this wonderful display of grace.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God. By embracing, and sincerely obeying, the christian religion, we become heirs of all its promises, and hopes. The great curse is removed—God's holy spirit is shed abroad in our hearts—and we are fitted for that heavenly state, which is prepared for us.

us. All this is the consequence of our being the adopted sons of God through Christ. We are purified in this world; and shall be glorified in the next.

But what is this state of glory which is promised to us? We are acquainted with the things of this world; and know, that they are adapted to us, and we to them: but what notices have we of these heavenly things?

It is true (says the apostle in answer to this question) *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. It is impossible in this world to have any ideas of the glory of the next. Flesh and blood cannot reveal these things to us; neither are we capable of receiving them, if they should be revealed. In these things, as in many others, *we must walk by faith, not by sight*.*—Under the guidance therefore of faith, we are assured, that *when he shall appear, we shall be like him*; for *we shall see him as he is*.—We have the same sentiment rather more strongly expressed, in St. Paul's epistle to the Philippians, *We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*.

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* 2 CORINTHIANS, 5. vii.

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The great conclusion is, that *every one, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he is pure*. And every one (if we may transpose the proposition, and turn it into a test) who doth not *purify himself, as he is pure*, may be assured, that he hath not *this hope in him*.

Godly

VI.

*Godly sorrow worketh repentance—but the sorrow
of the world worketh death.—2 Cor. 7. x.*

ST. PAUL, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, had delivered an incestuous person to *Satan*. What is meant by that phrase, we are not clearly informed. It is probable he meant only to remove the offender from the communion of the faithful.—Whatever the punishment was, it is certain it wrought its proper effect; and the offender was restored to his own peace of mind; and to the peace of the church.

To this event, the apostle alludes in the text; in which he places two kinds of sorrow in opposition to each other—*godly sorrow; and the sorrow of the world*: the former of which *worketh repentance*; the latter *death*.

Some people are apt to consider *sorrow* and *repentance* as the same thing. Hence arises the danger of a death-bed repentance, and the deceit, which men are inclined to put upon themselves. But they have no authority for such deceit from
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any thing the apostle says. He says only that godly sorrow *worketh repentance*, that is, it leads to it; but sorrow itself is no repentance. Nay even a *change of life*, is no *repentance*. Many worldly causes may make *open sin* inconvenient. True repentance is a change of heart, as well as life; and a detestation of sin, whether future punishment existed or not. It is this repentance, which godly sorrow worketh.

Again worldly sorrow *worketh death*. Like all other wrong affections, it *leadeth* to those consequences, which, without care, will draw on the fatal effects of sin. The first impression indeed of worldly sorrow on any misfortune is so natural, and unavoidable, that it cannot certainly be offensive in the eyes of a merciful God; if calm resignation, and submission to his will succeed. But when sorrow for any worldly event *continues*, and *takes possession of the soul*, it certainly argues a great dependance on the world for our hopes; and a renunciation of God, as our *supreme happiness*.

And yet here, for the sake of some good, and melancholy people, I should wish to make a distinction. When the *kind affections of love, and friendship*

friendship have received some great convulsion, the wrongness cannot be so offensive to God, as when the loss respects only some worldly possession. Yet even the overflowings of these tender affections, we should endeavour to moderate ; and *should not sorrow, as others that have no hope, for them that sleep : for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again ; even so them also, that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.**

Let us then all endeavour to *sorrow after a godly sort*. This world is sometimes called a vale of sorrow. Its brooks are tears : its gales are sighs. The gloomy images of woe, in some part of our passage through it, will not fail to strike us. Since sorrow then must be so much our *companion*, let us endeavour to make it our *friend* ; and learn all the good lessons (and many good lessons there are) which it is enabled to teach.

N. B. If this subject were enlarged on, the distinction between *worldly sorrow*, and *godly sorrow* might be explained more fully ; and it might be shewn what those good lessons are which they both teach.

* 1 THESSALONIANS, 4. xiii.

VII.

—*He went on his way rejoicing.*—Acts 8. xxxix.

THESE words are taken from the very instructive, and interesting story of Philip, and the Ethiopian. I shall *first* give you the circumstances of the story, with some remarks upon it—and shall *secondly* explain the subject of the Ethiopian's *rejoicing*.

On the persecution of christianity, carried on with so much violence by Saul, many of the disciples left Jerusalem, and retired to various parts; where they preached the gospel. Among others Philip went to Samaria; from whence, by the designation of God, he was sent to a desert part of the country, between Jerusalem and Gaza. Here he met the treasurer of Candace, queen of Ethiopia. This person, tho of an idolatrous nation, believed in the true God---was acquainted with the jewish scriptures---and used at the great festivals to go to worship at Jerusalem. One of these great festivals he had been now attending; and was returning home, when Philip met him. He was riding in

in his chariot, and reading the prophecy of Isaiah; little thinking of the extraordinary means of new illumination, which God, in his providence was preparing for him. Philip under the direction of the holy spirit, asked him, if he understood what he read? The Ethiopian answered, he had need of an interpreter: and observing that Philip was a Jew ---a man of respectable appearance; and probably skilled in the scriptures---he desired him to come into his chariot; and explain what he had been reading. The passage he read was one of those prophecies of Isaiah, in which the death of the Messiah is so circumstantially related.---Inform me, said the Ethiopian, of whom doth the prophet speak this; of himself, or of some other person? Philip taking occasion from this passage, opened to him the whole evangelical dispensation; and explained to him the completion both of the prophecy he had just been reading, and of several other prophecies relating to the Messiah. The Ethiopian was fully convinced of the truth of what he heard; (for which, we may suppose, he was well prepared by his knowledge of the jewish scriptures) and as they approached a pool of water, asked Philip, if he had any objection to baptize him? Philip told him, he had none; if from

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his heart he could profess his belief in Christ : which the Ethiopian professing in the strongest terms, was baptized. It then pleased God to confirm his faith, by miraculously conveying Philip instantaneously from his sight.—Thus was the christian religion introduced into Ethiopia, where this officer of queen Candace had a great hand in planting it ; as we are informed by some church-historians ; tho their accounts, perhaps depend on little better authority, than the great probability of it.

After Philip was conveyed from the Ethiopian, we are told that pious convert *went on his way rejoicing*. This leads me to the second point I designed to consider—the subject of his joyful meditation. We may suppose it might have run in some such strain as this.

Blessed be God, for sending this holy man to enlighten my eyes ! I early saw the grossness of idolatry ; and since I became acquainted with the jewish scriptures, I have ever admired the majesty and grandeur of the jewish worship. It hath ever been delightful to me, at these stated feasts, to worship the great God of heaven at Jerusalem. Yet still I had my doubts, and difficulties. I could never perceive the use and intention of all

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those singular rites; and ceremonies, with which the temple-worship of the Jews abounded. Many of them appeared to me strange, and affected; and what still tended more to increase my doubts, the prophets, in many parts of their writings, speak slightly of them.—Now all my doubts are vanished. I see these ceremonies, and sacrifices, leading me, as it were by the hand, to a more effectual atonement. I see the obscure veil of prophecy removed; and all the truths of the gospel opening to mine eyes. I see the malignity of sin; and the only way, in which the trespasses of man can hope to be forgiven. A future world is opened to my view---a state of happiness; of which I had no conception before.---God grant, that that faith in Christ, which I have just professed, may lead me to a holy life! May it give me such sanctity of manners, as may make me a new-born creature; and enable me to obtain that gracious inheritance, which the gospel hath promised!

Thus this holy convert *went on his way rejoicing*. Let not us who are baptized into this faith in our infancy, consider it with less joy. The commonness of a blessing is apt to take from the enjoyment of it. If we should be deprived only a few moments

moments of the air we breathe ; or a few days, of the bread we eat, we should then with gratitude acknowledge the value of those blessings which we now treat with neglect. But among all the blessings we neglect, let not the gospel be one. Let the thoughts of our salvation in Christ, be always our solid comfort : and amidst all the difficulties of life, through this great consolation, let us continually go on *our way rejoicing*.

VIII.

If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.—2 Corinthians, 8. xii.

ST. PAUL, in the chapter, from which the text is taken, had been exhorting his Corinthian converts to make a charitable contribution for their poor fellow-christians: and, in order to bring the duty home to each of them; he tells them in the text, that God will reward them not in proportion to *what* they give; but in proportion to the *willingness* with which they give. As far therefore as their charity related to God, both rich and poor might do a service equally acceptable.

Now this is the constant doctrine of scripture.—Nor indeed is it confined to charity—but extended to every duty. The heart, that conceives, and fully intends the action on right motives, is what God requires: the bare external deed in his sight is nothing. In our dealings with the world indeed it is the leading figure; but in our heavenly accounts it is a cypher. It is the motive only on which

which the eye of heaven is fixed. Thus one fervent ejaculation, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* from a heart truly smitten with a sense of sin, reached the throne of grace; while a thousand prayers, with lifted eyes and hands from one *standing in the corner of a street*, were wasted by. It was the intention which gave value to the *widow's mite*; and would give value to a *cup of cold water*, on a proper motive.

Since then it is not the *deed*, but the *willing mind*, that God accepts, what a mighty encouragement is it to those, who have nothing but the *willing mind* to offer? They may do as many generous, and kind, and acceptable things in the sight of God, as if they had thousands. They may be doing friendly, and benevolent actions continually; and even reap the reward of them from God; tho they may scarce be able to expend a farthing.

But pause a moment, my friend. That there may be no mistake in this matter, you must be well assured, that you have the *willing mind*. You may easily deceive yourself in this matter. It is not sitting down, and in a reverie of imagination saying to yourself, How gladly would I give to such, or such a person; if I had it in my power! That is a mighty easy way of having a *willing mind*;

mind: and would turn the *broad* way into the *narrow* one at once.

Try yourself therefore by the following questions. Are you strictly conscientious in the performance of all other religious duties, which are in your power? If you are, it is a test, that you would be strict also in the performance of such as are not in your power.

Are you always ready to assist your neighbour in such little offices, as are within your means? Are you ready to spare, to his greater necessity, a little of your time, for instance, or a little of your labour? If you are, it is probable, you would be ready to bestow upon him a little of your money also.

Lastly, are you *content*, and *perfectly resigned*, whatever your station is? If you are not, I should fear it were hardly possible for you to possess a *willing mind* to assist others. For how can you have any real inclination to give to them, while you are yet dissatisfied, and have not gotten enough for yourself?

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IX.

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.—2 Cor. 12. xii.

THE several parts of the gospel, like those of a regular, and well-contrived building, are adapted to each other. If it require us to believe things, which are not immediately obvious to our reason; it gives our reason sufficient evidence, that it has authority to promulge them. If it give us rules for our conduct, which are evidently carried higher, than human abilities can go; it hath at the same time provided a supernatural assistance, which, if we manfully exert our own powers, will carry us farther than our own powers could go by themselves.

This was the apostle Paul's case. He had undergone some great trial, which he calls a *thorn in the flesh*, and had requested God's assistance. The answer he received (in what mode of conveyance we are not informed) was in the words of the text. From these words I wish to establish this point—

point—that the affiance of God's holy spirit will always be given in proportion to our exigencies.

It is certainly one of the nicest points in reading scripture, to distinguish between such passages, as apply chiefly to gospel-times; and such as are of universal application. An inattention to this distinction has contributed more than any thing, to over-run the christian world with enthusiasm—often, no doubt, well-meant; but as often absurd, and even ridiculous. Now mistakes of this kind are chiefly made by those, who avowedly turn reason, and common sense out of doors in their interpretations of scripture.—But as it pleased God almighty to continue to us the use of reason and common sense, after he put the scripture into our hands--and as the scripture itself, not only in its evidence, but in every thing else, except some of its sublime truths, is an appeal to reason, and common sense; we must necessarily bring its doctrines, and its rules, and modes of expression to this test. The scripture itself gives us no other. Indeed it is the only way we have to distinguish truth from error. Thus we must abide in the absurdity of transubstantiation, for instance, if we will not use our reason in explaining a literal expression of scripture

scripture into a figurative one.---So glaring an absurdity indeed as this the enthusiast himself sees in its full light. If we enquire how? we find it is by the use of his reason. He himself therefore uses his reason on some occasions: but he tells us, we must not carry our reason too far. So say we; but who is to draw the line? Indeed what can draw it, but our reason? So that reason must not only operate; but must determine how far it may carry its operations.

With regard to the present question, it is evident, that these times are under very different circumstances from the early times of the gospel. In its infancy, when it was publishing to the heathen; it called for the aid of supernatural power. Now, when it is established in its full force of evidence, it is enough if we have sufficient testimony, that this supernatural power once existed; and that such powers are still continued to us, as are necessary.---The apostle Paul, who was sent to preach the gospel among the heathen; and could not know what nations were prepared to receive it, had many heavenly visions to direct his course—he was *pressed in spirit*—and had powers intrusted to him as well to direct his motions, as to shew, that he came from God. It was absolutely necessary.---

necessary.—But is it so now? The christian minister has now his fixed place of abode—the whole land is christian; and wants no miraculous proof of the truth of the gospel.

How far then may we reasonably expect the assistance of the holy spirit? So far as we reasonably want it; and no farther.—Mankind are still mankind. The truth of the gospel cannot change the nature of man. Man, left to himself, has still the same evil dispositions about him; and the assistance of the holy spirit is therefore always *wanted*. It was an opinion of the heathen world, that the assistance of the Gods was necessary to the performance of all great actions. This noble idea of nature, christianity hath confirmed. The christian is assured, that in all his conflicts with his spiritual enemies, if he exert with honest sincerity, the powers of nature, he shall be farther aided by those of grace.

He seems in the mean time, to have no business to enquire in what manner, or under what circumstances this divine aid will be granted. Some indeed pretend to feel the illapse of the holy spirit; and to fix the moment, when it enters the heart. But our blessed Saviour *seems* to determine otherwise. *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou*
hearest

hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whether it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit: that is, (as I should humbly interpret the words) when the blessed spirit does assist human nature, (which is not continually, but only when it *listeth*, that is, when it is necessary) its effect is undoubted; but of its *mode* of operation—whether by giving a turn to our thoughts—or acting upon us by the medium of outward circumstances, we can form no judgment---we cannot tell whence it cometh, nor whether it goeth. Of this however we may be assured, that *its aid will always be in proportion to our necessities*.

This indeed seems plain from the text. *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*: that is, the weaker thou art, my strength shall be the more shewn in assisting thee.

This passage of scripture seems to represent St. Paul in the exact case of an ordinary christian. In his private capacity as a man (for the passage seems to have no concern with his public ministration as an apostle) he had been pressed by some great trial. He prayed *thrice*—that is, *frequently*, for God's assistance; and received the answer of the text, which is recorded, no doubt, for our use; and

and plainly sets forth this doctrine, that God's assistance will be in proportion to our necessities—provided we take the method St. Paul did, of praying earnestly for it, and using our own best endeavours.

Nor is this only the doctrine of St. Paul; but the universal tenor of scripture. Our blessed Lord assures his disciples, that whatever their exigencies may be, they shall receive proportional assistance from heaven: *for it was not they who spoke; but the spirit of their father, who dwelt in them.*

Now the same spirit, which dwelt in them, dwelleth in us: and it seems a safe, and just, and scriptural conclusion, that its *mode of operation* is still the same, allowing only for its being *extraordinary* in one case, and *ordinary* in the other. If therefore the apostles partook of the *former*, in proportion to *their* necessities, it may be hoped, that we, in a similar manner, may partake of the *latter*, in proportion to *ours*.

Agreeably to which indeed the spirit is represented in other passages of scripture, as *strengthening us with might in the inward man* (that is, when we stand in need of strengthening) and *help-*
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ing our infirmities—when those infirmities are likely to betray us.

Now there is no doctrine of christianity which is more comfortable to a serious mind, than this. It is a provision for our *necessities*. Tho it may not administer to wants of a *less important kind*—nor in all cases, where *we* may deem it necessary—yet in cases of real need, it is always a *supply*—it is *manna from the clouds*, and *water from the rock*.

It sometimes falls out, that religious people, when they look into the lives of eminent professors of the gospel ; and see them abandoning the world for their religion ; or even laying down their lives for its sake, are apt to feel themselves uneasy, and distressed under the comparison ; and to fret, because they think, they could not themselves undergo such trials of their faith, with equal fortitude.

But let them not be distressed. In the hands of God, the weakest instruments may become the strongest. We know not, what we can suffer, till we are tried. Or rather animal spirits have nothing to do in the matter. God hath chosen *the weak things of the world to confound the mighty* ; and will shew us that *when we are weak*, we are in reality *strong*.

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X.

I will make thee a terror to thyself.—Jeremiah

20. iv.

THIS was spoken to a wicked man, from God by the prophet Jeremiah—and a more dreadful sentence could not be pronounced. When a man is in terror from things without him, there is some chance—some hope of escaping the mischief. But when he is a *terror to himself*, he carries the mischief always about him. Even in his very sleep he is unable to shake it off. He starts from his dreams with wildness, and horror.

Now nothing can occasion this terror, but guilt; and nothing, on this side the grave, can shew guilt in so dreadful a light. This was the terror that possessed Cain. This was the terror that possessed Judas Iscariot.—Gracious God, preserve us all from those crimes, which make us a terror to ourselves !

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XI.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.—Luke

13. xxiv.

THIS seems, at first sight, to be among the *hard sayings* of the gospel. That any should seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and not be able, has something of the cast of predestination about it. And so this text hath sometimes been interpreted. But if we examine it with the context, we shall find it totally innocent of any such meaning.

In the first place, the verse itself points out the sense. In the former part of the verse we are ordered to *strive*. But they who *shall not be able to enter*, are those only who *seek* : that is, who are much more careless about the matter, than the others.*

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* Whoever looks into the original, will find the opposition between the words *strive*, and *seek*, much stronger, than our translation expresses it.

In the second place it plainly appears, that these careles persons depended on a death-bed repentance. The *door was shut* before they began to knock, and cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us.*

Thirdly it appears, that those persons had no evidence to produce in their favour, except that they had eaten and drunk in Christ's presence, and that he had taught in their streets: that is, they had only an outward connection with Christ; but knew nothing of him in their hearts.

Lastly, it is very plain from their sentence, that their own wickedness, not God's decree, was the cause of their rejection: *I know you not, whence ye are, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.*

XII.

Cleanse thou me from my secret faults.—Psalms

19. xii.

MORE or less every man has two characters.

In public he is desirous to appear with his best face; and hangs out often the sign of virtues, which are not found within. Within too he often harbours vices, which never appear abroad.

These secret sins are of various kinds. Often they consist of *bad thoughts*. When these wicked intruders are immediately driven out by an effort of reason, and religion, it is well: no harm ensues. But when they are encouraged, and make their abode, the mind is turned into a receptacle of avarice, impurity, malice, selfishness, or any other darling vice, to which its propensity leads. Against all this corruption of the heart, to which the Almighty only is privy, the psalmist prays.

Sometimes these bad thoughts are matured into deeper sins, by being digested into wicked designs, that still in secret. Some scheme of malice is laid

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More

—some plan of revenge—or some train of corruption.

Sometimes they are pushed still farther into actions——such as petty frauds—commodious lies—indulgences of passions, and appetites, and many other modes of transgression, which may be dexterously concealed from the eye of the world. All these may be ranked among our *secret sins*.

There is still another kind of sin, which may be called *secret*. When an action is *plausible*, and the motive *base*, the action is sinful: but it is sinful only in the secret recesses of the heart. The eye of God alone sees it. Under *this* head we may reckon all acts of hypocrisy.

The last kind of *secret sins* I shall mention are such sins, as are secrets even to ourselves. And this perhaps was David's principal idea, when he speaks of *secret sins*. *Who can tell* (says he, in the words preceding the text) *how oft he offendeth: cleanse thou me from my secret sins*. And thus we pray in our litany, that God would pardon our *ignorances*.—That we may commit a sinful action without knowing it to be such, is certain. A furious zealot may think he does God service by persecuting one of a different sect. St. Paul thought

thought so: but he confesses he acted *sinfully*, notwithstanding he acted *ignorantly*. He should have informed himself better; which, if his prejudice had not intervened, he might have done.

Thus again, with regard to (an instance, which has lately made great noise in the world—) the slave-trade, it may be hoped, that many who defend it, are well-meaning people, and think they are right; but at the same time if they could get rid of certain prejudices, which an attachment to party, or a love of gain throws before their eyes, they might perhaps see they were acting in direct contradiction to the scripture-rule of *doing to others as they would have others do to them*: unless indeed they suppose, that a man's being of a different complexion disqualifies him from being an object of gospel-precept.—Many other cases might be mentioned; in all which we sin, if we act contrary to such information, as God hath given us the means, and ability to obtain.

I shall conclude the subject with observing that we should strive against that temptation, which *secrecy* holds out, to commit sin. We should always recollect, we are continually under the inspection of that great Being, with whom *darkness and light are both alike*.

A a 2

Every

XIII.

Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed.—James 1. xiv.

THAT is, in other words, every man is placed in a *state of trial*.

That we are placed in such a state seems to admit of little doubt. We prove it from various topics, taken from the world around us—from the imperfection of every thing we see—from the nature of man—and from the word of God. But I shall endeavour to prove it here only by that striking connection, which subsists between every christian grace and its correspondent temptation.

Man is born into the world with passions, and appetites suited to the various temptations he will have to meet with. At the same time, to assist him in his contest with these temptations, he is endowed with reason, and conscience----with the instructions of God's holy word, and the promise of his divine assistance. Thus furnished he launches into life; and immediately begins his spiritual

ritual contest. Every passion, and appetite, he finds has its correspondent temptation to try, and purify it by resistance. Every virtue, which the gospel enjoins, is by some occasion brought to proof.

Are we taught to love God, and have a continual sense of his divine presence upon our minds? As this great presiding power is *invisible*, we are strongly assailed to put our trust in a multitude of *visible* objects, which the world presents on every side.

Are we taught in the gospel that we have no merits of our own that can deserve eternal happiness--that eternal happiness is procured for us only by the death, and atonement of a Saviour? Instead of examining the truth of scripture, in which this doctrine is contained, (as it is certainly incumbent on us to do) we suffer ourselves to be tempted, and led away by designing men, and bad books, and learn to set up our own *reason*, and our own *righteousness*, as sufficient to *instruct* and *save* us.

Are we taught to love our neighbour--to be benevolent, and communicate good to others? Self-love is continually working within--opposing

our kind intentions, and endeavouring to draw all to itself.

Are honesty and fair-dealing prescribed to us in our intercourse with others? A thousand petty frauds, and modes of deceit, peculiar to every profession, place our virtue in a constant scene of trial.

Are we ordered to be temperate in the use of the good things of this world? A variety of delicacies, if we abound, are continually assailing us; and in all circumstances we find pleasures and gratifications of different kinds to seduce us.

Humility is among the greatest of christian virtues. But amidst the variety of competitions, with which the world abounds, it is a difficult matter to guard against pride, and self-consequence. These imperious inmates are continually pointing out situations, to which we have as good a right to aspire, as they who possess them.

The forgiveness of injuries is a doctrine, which the gospel strongly enjoins. But malice, and revenge are sweet gratifications, and powerful incentives.

In many cases reason, and religion engage a man to risk his life. But the fear of death is continually opposing his generous purposes.

Thus

Thus every virtue, and virtuous action, finds some correspondent temptation to bring it to proof; from which we draw, I think, an irresistible argument that this world was intended for a state of trial. When we see the teeth of two correspondent shells clasp together, and fitted with such exact relation to each other, we cannot but conclude, they were originally formed with a view to this union.

From the consideration of a state of trial two or three obvious truths arise.

In the first place, it seems a proof beyond atheistical cavil, of the providence of God. If the adaptation of one thing to another in *mere matter*, be thought of little moment--here we see the same adaptation in a higher scale, in the ordering of the moral world.

Secondly a state of trial proves strongly the existence of a future state. A trial, in its very nature, indicates some connected cause, for which that trial was made: and as our trial lasts through this world, it seems to point at another.

Thirdly, it proves, among a variety of other proofs, the truth of religion. A state of trial is exactly that state of moral discipline, which is held

out

out in the gospel; and in this correspondence, they corroborate each other. There is every appearance of their being parts of one united plan. And as we have proved a state of trial to be derived from God, so is its counterpart, the gospel.

- That

XIV.

That which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.—Luke 16. xv.

LOOK into any part of life, and you will find this truth ascertained. We are continually doing things, which are highly esteemed among men, but abominable in the sight of God. Maxims in trade and business, are directed chiefly to the accumulation of wealth. Amusements are carried far beyond the idea of relaxation, and end in dissipation and riot. Even the pursuits of science are often carried too far--and end in what the scriptures call worldly wisdom---often in infidelity.—Now all these things, and various other things, which may be classed with them, are highly esteemed among men, tho they are abomination in the sight of God.

The great conclusion therefore is, that the opinion, and judgement of the world should never be made the *criterion of our actions*. We have a true criterion given us in the scriptures, and there we should seek it.

God

XV.

God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that ye always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.—2 Cor. 9. viii.

THE word *grace* has here a worldly, rather than a spiritual sense. The apostle is disposing his converts to a charitable contribution; and the doctrine of the text seems to be, that God will recompense the charitable man with *worldly blessings*; and in reward of his charities *will not suffer the barrel of meal to waste, nor the cruise of oil to fail.*

But now for what end was this doctrine thrown out? Not surely as a motive to charity: for when a man is charitable on this motive, he turns his charity into avarice.

The doctrine of the text therefore seems to be held out only as an encouragement to those pious, good people, who are sometimes checked in their charitable designs, by fearing lest they should exceed their circumstances, and bring their families to want. To such persons the text says, Be not afraid

afraid of falling into want yourself from your kindness to others; for God hath said, and seems to mean it in a literal sense, that *he who soweth plentifully, shall reap also plentifully.*

Early

Early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up.—Psalm 5. iii.

I will lay me down in peace, and take my rest ; for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.—Psalm 4. ix.

THESE two passages mark the limits (the morning, and evening) of a pious day. The religious man, in whose life such a day makes an accustomed part, rises early, and directs his prayer unto God. All is calm, and quiet around him. His mind is not yet engaged in the bustle of the day ; and he dedicates to God those moments of peace. The adoration of the divine attributes—a request for the assistance of God's holy spirit, in all difficulties—a grateful, thanksgiving for the protection of the past night—and a humble request for the continuance of that protection through the following day, are the immediate subject of his prayers.—Under the holy influence of such sentiments he then goes abroad

abroad into the world; and whatever his business is, he pursues it with cheerfulness, industry, and honesty. Yet still he *kath God in all his thoughts*. He hath always about him a sense of God's continual presence—and a sense of duty, which reminds him, that as he is a member of society, he is also a creature of God.

As night draws on, his cares end. Recommending himself again to God, *he lays him down in peace, and takes his rest, For it is Thou only, O Lord, he cries, that makest me dwell in safety.*

Thou

XVII.

Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?

—Romans 2. xxi.



THIS piece of scripture should be the motto of every clergyman. He who does not adopt it into his practice, is the keenest satirist upon himself.

But the preacher, you say, excites his hearers *to go on unto perfection*—to obey precepts, which neither they nor he, can live up to ; and to imitate examples, which are equally beyond the reach of both.

It is true : and the christian minister is not expected to be an angel. At best, like the Jewish high-priest, in St. Paul's language, he will be *compassed with infirmities*. Yet still when he exhorts others *to go on unto perfection*, he must *endeavour* after perfection himself. The point is, honestly to *endeavour* ; and if he fail in that, then only the text recoils upon him : *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*

From

From *open sens*, one should hope even decency would restrain him. To hear a clergyman preach against drunkenness, when he himself is known to be fond of liquor—or to hear him preach against covetousness, when he is rigorous, and exorbitant in exacting his tithes—or to hear him preach up charity, when all his neighbours know how hard-hearted he is to the poor—or to hear him recommend industry, when his own life is spent in dissipation, and frivolous amusements—is vile and abominable; and beyond the practice of any, but such as are hardened into a disgrace to their profession; such as cannot *reprove the unfruitful works of darkness*, because they have *fellowship with them*.

Laying admonition on this head therefore aside, we should wish to make a closer application to the preacher, and speak—not to his *outward actions*—but to his *heart*.

Thou then that preacheest to another a belief in Christ---a renunciation of the world---and the comforts of the gospel---is thy own faith fully established?-----Dost thou take Christ into thy heart, as thy Lord, and master?-----Dost thou esteem all things as naught, that thou *mayest win Christ* ? Is the world *crucified to thee, and thou to*

to the world? Dost thou feel what it is to be a *new creature?* Art thou, in the apostle's language, a *stranger and pilgrim upon earth?*—All these things thou preacheest to others; and tho, as was observed before, thou canst not arrive at perfection in any of these things, yet if thou dost not make a conscientious endeavour to form thy heart after the pattern, which thou thus preacheest to others, thou must surely feel the distress of self-conviction---and hast passed a sentence upon thyself, which will surely, one day, appear against thee.

So much for thyself; and as to thy hearers, it will be difficult to impress them with any thing, that does not come from thy heart. It will be cold, and languid, and uttered without that energy, which a conscious love of truth inspires.

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XVIII.

The manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit withal.—1 Cor. 12. vii.

IN the chapter, from which this verse is taken, the various gifts of the spirit are enumerated, which were dispersed in an *extraordinary manner* at the first promulgation of the gospel. With these, at present we are not concerned. But the text seems as applicable to the *ordinary*, as the *extraordinary*, effusions of God's spirit: and to these I mean to confine myself—those effusions of the spirit which are still *given to every man to profit withal*. I shall endeavour therefore to explain to you the scripture doctrine of the illumination of the spirit; and of its *progress*, and *decay* in the heart of man.

My first proposition is, that *all mankind, universally, good and bad without exception, are inspired by the holy spirit of God*. The scriptures every where, I think, talk this language. What is meant by *God's striving with man; and man's*

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B b

resisting

resisting the holy spirit of God, but that the holy spirit not only dwells with good men; but with those also, who resist, and oppose it?—Thus then we suppose, that with regard to the holy spirit of God, all mankind are on an equality. The whole depends on the use they make of it.

My next proposition is, that *what constitutes a good man, is his listening to the suggestions of the holy spirit of God*. We are assured in scripture,—that nothing good can arise from ourselves. Every good thought therefore and good action, is suggested to us by the holy spirit of God. And our goodness consists merely in listening to its suggestions, and following them. But still this is not supposed to make a man capable of *earning his own salvation*, if I may so speak. Of himself he is nothing. There dwells in him no good thing. His attending however to the suggestions of the holy spirit of God; and leading in consequence a holy life; are graciously accepted by God, as the means of qualifying him, in the fight of God, for the salvation offered him through Christ in the gospel.

My last proposition is, that *what constitutes a bad man, is his refusing to listen to the suggestions of the holy spirit of God*. So far as we do not listen

listen to them we are under the guidance of those wicked propensities, which we inherited from our forefather. What little goodness the bad man may have, as few men are without some good qualities, he entirely obtains, by listening to the holy spirit of God. But as he generally listens to the world, and its temptations, the voice of God's spirit within him, grows weaker, and weaker; till at length it will be hardly heard. And yet we cannot suppose, that even in the most abandoned men the spirit of God is wholly extinguished.— There must still remain some latent spark: other-wise, (as in himself there can be *no good thing*) there could not, one should suppose, be any repentance.

Thus the spirit of God is given to *every man to profit withal*; and it is every man's own fault, if he do not profit by it.

XIX.

Work out your own salvation with fear, and trembling; for it is God, which worketh in you, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure.—Philippians 2. xii.

IN this passage there are several things, which want explaining.

Let us *first* consider what is meant by *working out our own salvation*. This text at first sight implies, what the apostle certainly never meant it should imply, that we have the power *to work out our own salvation* ourselves. If that had been the case, the christian atonement had been useless. Christ had died in vain.

The salvation of man is every where represented in scripture as depending on two things—his own endeavours; and the merits of Christ. Neither will save him without the other. It is very plain therefore, that when the apostle bids us *work out our own salvation* he is not explaining to us the whole mode of our salvation, but is only enjoining us to do *that part*, which belongs to ourselves.

We

We next observe that we are not only exhorted to *work out our own salvation*, but to do it *with fear and trembling*. This expression is used in two or three other parts of scripture; and seems only to imply great care, caution, and anxiety.

—There is no difficulty however in this clause. It is not at all wonderful; that what depends on man, should be so liable to error, and negligence, as to demand the strongest exhortations to care, and watchfulness.

But in the next clause there is somewhat more of difficulty. The reason given for our *working out our own salvation with fear and trembling* is at first sight, rather peculiar. It is because God worketh in us *both to will and to do*. If God *work out our salvation*, where is the necessity of our working at all; or being in *any fear and trembling* about the matter? But we should consider, that as all the effectual efforts we can make of *working out our own salvation* depend on our listening to the holy spirit of God, it is certainly a mighty reason for our *working* with all the care, and caution we can; lest we should do any thing to prevent, or impair, its gracious admonitions.

B b 3

We

We are told farther that God worketh in us both to will, and to do, *of his good pleasure*. This appears, as if God wrought in us, in an arbitrary manner: whereas this is directly opposite to the apostle's meaning. If God work in us, in an arbitrary manner, it would certainly be of no use for us to work for ourselves; which we are carefully instructed to do. The meaning therefore of the expression, is, not that it is God's good pleasure to work for *one more than for another*: but that it is his good pleasure, that he *works for any of us at all*.

XX.

The end of all things is at hand. Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer: and above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.

—1 Peter' 4. vii.



A SENSE has been commonly put upon this passage, which appears to me a degrading one. The generality of commentators* refer the end of all things here mentioned, to the destruction of Jerusalem. For myself, I see nothing relative to the destruction of Jerusalem in the whole context. It appears to other expositors, § referring to a very different subject.

What indeed was the destruction of Jerusalem to those, whom St. Peter addressed? His was a catholic epistle, written to all christians, wherever dispersed, very few of whom probably had any concern with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Besides, I think this sense injures the apostle's reasoning. *The destruction of Jerusalem is at hand—therefore be sober.* How so? What inducement

* See PYLE, WHITEY, &c. § See POLE, and DODDRIDGE.

ducement to sobriety was the destruction of Jerusalem? If a man were necessarily involved in that destruction, to such a man it might be an inducement to sobriety. But all good christians were warned, over and over, of that great event; and ordered to fly from it. And accordingly we find from history, that all good christians did retire from Jerusalem at that time; and left the wicked to perish in their infidelity. The destruction of Jerusalem therefore could be to such people no inducement to sobriety.

As the *end of all things*, therefore, cannot, I think, be referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, so neither can it well be referred, as its *obvious* meaning implies, to the *end of the world*. The apostle would hardly call the *end of the world* an *event at hand*, which was *at least* removed to the distance of seventeen hundred years. He rather therefore seems to mean, by the *end of all things*, *every man's death*, which is to him the *end of all things*. This makes the sense both connect with the context; and with itself.

The apostle begins the chapter by exhorting his converts, (who seem chiefly to have been Gentiles) to overcome the world, after the example of Christ; which is the only way, he tells them, to
cease

cease from sin, and lead a life consonant to the will of God. Their past lives were sufficient to have been spent in wickedness; and the gospel was preached to them, that their souls might be saved hereafter in the day of Christ.—Then follows the text. The end of all things is at hand. *Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer: and above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.* This world will soon be over, as far as you are concerned in it, do those things therefore, which will secure to you a better.

In this light then you see the text is clearly connected with the context: for what can be more closely united, than death, and a future life?

The reasoning too of the text, is equally just: for what can be a stronger incentive to sobriety, and holiness, and charity, than the consideration that this world is passing away?

Having thus considered the former part of the text; the latter will give us little trouble. *Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer: and above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.*

Whoever is acquainted with the manner of writing usual in the holy scriptures, well knows, how customary it is to place one duty for all the duties

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Whoever is acquainted with the manner of writing usual in the holy scriptures, well knows, how customary it is to place one duty for all the duties

duties of that class. The scripture proceeds on this supposition, that he, who practises one duty on a true christian principle; would be influenced by the same principle to practise all other duties—as he, who can knowingly, and with his eyes open, be guilty of one sin, would not scruple any other. We have here therefore the whole duty of man sketched out, in few words, as it relates to himself—his Creator—and his fellow-creatures.

Sobriety is sometimes opposed in scripture to pride, and other disorders of the mind.* And sometimes it is opposed to sensuality.† So that we may consider it as respecting the whole government of ourselves.

The duties of prayer, and watchfulness are frequently mentioned together. St. Peter in particular, could never forget the lesson which he himself once received on that subject. *What! could you not watch with me one hour? Watch, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* Watchfulness in prayer therefore signifies, that collected spirit, with which we should endeavour to overcome the infirmities of nature in our intercourse with the Almighty. The man who can attain this, has made a great proficiency in heavenly affections. He who can

* ROMANS 12. viii. † TITUS 2. vi.

pray

pray well, will also live well. His affections are well-ordered. But, alas! the best of men have occasion to complain of languor, and inattention on this subject; and need often be reminded of the great duty of *watching unto prayer*.

We are next exhorted, *above all things to have fervent charity among ourselves*. I do not suppose that the apostle meant by the expression *above all things*, to exalt charity above piety: unless he meant to lay an emphasis upon it, as the great principle, which is to lead us on from earthly love to heavenly; according to that of St. John, *He who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen; how can he love God, whom he hath not seen*.—*Fervent* is neither a good word, nor a good translation.—In the first place, *fervent* expresses the *passion*, rather than the *affection*. It has too much of carnality in it; and gives us a very different idea from the original word, which signifies properly *extended*, or *universal*. Here comes in then precisely the christian idea. *Fervent charity* should be *universal benevolence*.

The great conclusion arising from the whole, is, that we have here that disposition pointed out to us, under which every good christian ought to live.

Lct

Let the children of this world build houses, and plant vineyards—*pull down their barns, and build greater—and say to their souls, you have much goods laid up for many years: eat, drink, and be merry.* But let us, who have juster notions of religion, consider this world as passing away. *The end of all things is at hand.* Let us then be moderate in all our desires after the enjoyments of life—let us excite in ourselves heavenly mindedness; and a holy communion with the father of spirits—endeavouring, while we continue in this earthly tabernacle, to exercise our affections towards our fellow creatures; and so prepare and qualify our minds for that divine love, which is to be the height of our enjoyment hereafter.

A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump.—1 Cor.

5. vi.

THIS was a proverbial mode of speaking among the Jews; and is used sometimes in a *good*, and sometimes in a *bad* sense. It is here taken in a *bad* sense. The apostle was afraid the christian converts at Corinth might be infected with the manners of their country, which were very profligate. In a *good* sense it is taken, where our Saviour compares the growth of the gospel *to leaven hid in a bushel of meal*. I shall make a practical use therefore of both senses; and take occasion from them to shew you, the great obligation we are all under with regard to exactness in our words, and actions, merely as far as others are concerned; because *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*.

No man then can answer for the effect, which the lightest impropriety in his words, or actions, may have upon another. It may touch some string in unison with it, which might never have struck

struck a note, if it had not been for this vibration. You may yourself be a serious man, and reverence the scriptures : but you may perhaps have suffered some little light parody, or inadvertent interpretation to have escaped you ; which may drop a seed of infidelity in a corrupt heart. This may take root : and from it again, by a still farther fermentation on the minds of others, a new crop of infidelity may spring. If your inadvertent interpretation had not given a mind, yet unformed, a wrong turn, it might have been open to some better impression. Whoever attends to his own thoughts, must be sensible what trifles often give birth to a train of thinking.

Now take the word *leaven* in a good sense. The justness of some religious thought, or the beauty of some religious action may make an indelible impression on a well-disposed mind : and, it is possible, may give a man's life, and conversation a new turn. So many instances of this kind have happened in the world ; that some enthusiastic people have perhaps taken from hence their ideas of miraculous conversion.

Considering therefore how very liable we are to catch contagion from each other, it should ever be, as much as possible, present with us, to avoid every thing

thing, that may corrupt the minds of those, we are concerned with. At the same time we should be equally ready, when we can do it with propriety, to throw out good hints for their improvement.

It is impossible for any human being to guard his words and his actions with *perfect care*; yet still perhaps we may have fewer idle words to account for than we perhaps otherwise might have, if we keep it continually in our minds, that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*.

XXII.

Do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.—Matthew 6. iii.

IN the divine discourse, from whence this verse is taken, our blessed Saviour corrects a number of impurities, and corrupt practices, which had obtained in the jewish church : and as the heart of man is at all times the same ; we shall, in general, find ourselves equally concerned in all these prohibitions, with the ancient jews. The spirit of different religions, and the customs of different nations, may modify vice in various ways ; but wherever man is found ; there all the great principles of wickedness will also be found with him, which will differ no more through the whole species, than the cast of one national countenance from another.—Thus the text, tho spoken to jews, is equally applicable to christians. In explaining it I shall first shew you what our Saviour means

means by *sounding a trumpet*; and shall then explain the subsequent sentence, *they have their reward*.

The trumpet was much used in the ceremonies of the jewish law: and was generally intended, as indeed it is now, to proclaim something, that men were concerned to hear. Hence to *sound a trumpet* became proverbial among the Jews. When the Pharisees therefore stood praying in the corners of the streets, our Saviour says *they sounded a trumpet*—that is, they called men by their hypocritical gestures to take notice of their sanctity.

But now, tho the customs, and manners of the times, we live in, will not bear us out in sounding our *trumpets* in the loud manner, in which these Pharisees sounded theirs; yet there are few of us, who do not wish to sound them in a lower note. In plain words, there are few of us, who are entirely satisfied with doing our good actions in the sight of our heavenly father, who seeth in secret. We should rather wish, that the eye of man might have a little view of them,

After the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, in which they had suffered so much for their idolatry, that mode of wickedness

ceased. The *fashionable* virtue among them became piety to God: and all the hypocrites of those days, who wished to attract the attention of the people, laid themselves out in frequenting the temple—in making their gift of Corban—in saying long prayers—and praying in the corners of the streets.

The *fashionable* virtue with us is not so much *piety* as *charity*. We are content, when we do pray, to pray in private: but we have often a secret wish, just to *sound the trumpet a little*, when we do an act of kindness, or charity. The times will not bear a loud, pharisaical blast: but a light, gentle air may answer our intention very well; and yet give no offence. It is an easy matter to give a hint of a kind intention—to drop an intimation, that things may go better with a distressed person by and by—or to consult a friend in what way a good office may best be done—with an earnest request, that the thing may not be spoken of, as it is a mere trifle. However it generally happens, that some way or other, the thing is spoken of and gets abroad. It is an easy matter to contrive a *private publication*.

But are we not ordered to *let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works*?

Certainly:

Certainly : but go on with the text. For what reason are they to see our good works ? Is it not that *they may glorify our Father, which is in heaven ?* Now if you do your good works in such a way, as to glorify yourself, rather than *your Father, which is in heaven* ; you certainly do not *let your light shine before men*, in the way which the scriptures enjoin.

The precise meaning of the text seems to be this. If your good works happen to be seen, let your heart refer them to God, who enables you to do them ; that he may be glorified through you his unworthy instrument. If you set *yourself* up as the doer of good works, you endeavour to get the praise from God, who professes himself to be the author of *all* good ; and whom you ought always to *glorify*.

It is the heart then chiefly which you must regard. If you be a benevolent man, your good works must often, of course, *be done before men* ; and you may often have occasion to consult a friend on the propriety of a charitable action : only be assured, that it is *performed* on a true religious principle ; and with as little ostentation as *possible ; and all is right*.

Having thus examined what our Saviour means

C c 2

by

by *sounding a trumpet*; I shall now explain the subsequent sentence, *they have their reward*.

The reward, which is promised to them who do not *sound a trumpet before men*, but perform their religious duties merely to please that God, *who seeth in secret*, is found in various parts of scripture.

On the other hand, they who do *sound their trumpet before men*, are not to go unrewarded. They too, the scripture assures us, shall *have their reward*. But as they laid out their goods, if I may so express it, in a worldly market, they are to expect only a worldly return. They trafficked for the praise of man. This was all they sought—and all they get.

Thus then, you see we have the option of two paymasters for our religious duties. The one offers us praise, and reputation among men, which may last for ten, or twenty, or thirty years, as it may happen.——The other affords us the solid comfort of everlasting happiness.——We may take our option, which of these rewards we think it most worth our while to aspire after; and may God of his infinite mercy direct our choice, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Without

XXIII.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to him, must believe that he is; and that he is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek him.—Hebrews 11. vi.

THE christian religion holds out rewards to encourage our obedience; and threatens our disobedience with punishment.

Now the question is, how far should these rewards, and punishments be motives of action?

The man of reason immediately informs us, that goodness derived from such motives, is no goodness at all—that it is merely the desire of happiness, and the fear of misery—and that a brute, furnished only with its natural instincts can exert as much virtue as this.—He will add perhaps, as the devil said formerly with regard to Job, that the christian *does not serve God for nought*: but that proper rewards are judiciously set before him, to keep his disinterested virtue from swerving.

What truth there is in all this; and how far the christian may act *virtuously* under the sanction of rewards, let us examine. I think it will appear, that they are a proper ground for religious conduct, from our considering, first the *nature* of them; and secondly the manner in which they *work upon us*.

Had the rewards, which the christian religion places before its worshippers, been such as the Arabian impostor promised——sensual pleasure in all its full-blown delights—the objection might have weight. The expectation of such rewards is calculated certainly to debase, not to improve the mind. But if the reward be of a holy, and virtuous kind, the expectation of it, or if you please, the making it a motive of action, must be holy, and virtuous likewise. Christianity which counts the enjoyments of this world as nothing; and raises our thoughts from earth to heaven; may well be supposed to spiritualize all our ideas of future happiness. Tho it does not enter into the explanation of this happiness and tell us the specific nature of it, which it could not do without a change in our understanding; yet we know it is such happiness only as holy spirits can delight in.

How

Now it is the excellence of the object, that elevates the pursuit. We put youth on the acquirement of learning; and have no conception, that the attainment of knowledge, which is the reward annexed, can debase his mind. It has certainly a contrary effect. In the same manner with regard to the rewards of another world, the very *pursuit* of them is health to the soul; as the *attainment* of them is its perfection.—They are pursued through the exercise of these great principles of faith and trust in God. These virtues, which have nothing earthly about them, tend to purify the mind in a high degree. They abstract it from earthly things, and fix it on heavenly. *Not having received the promises; but having seen them afar off*, through trust in God, *we are persuaded of them and embrace them.* The nature of these rewards we know not; but this ignorance gives a greater *value*, if I may so speak, to our pursuit.

We may safely conclude therefore, that as *it is impossible without faith to please God*; so is it impossible likewise to please him, unless we believe, *that he is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek him.*

N. B. If

N B. It might also be shewn, that the fear of future punishment, is a just motive of action. To the wicked indeed it is the natural dread of those consequences, which attend guilt; and serves merely to rouse them to a sense of their wickedness. But when it acts upon a well-disposed mind, in general habituated to right action, but fearful of giving offence, it consists in the fear of displeasing God—of being removed from his presence—and instead of enjoying the society of *just men made perfect*, of being removed to the company of the worst of beings. All these are just, rational, and religious motives of action.

XXIV.

The end of the commandment is charity.—1 Ti-

mothy 1. v.

IT is evident from the whole tenor of scripture (from the book of Genesis, in which the history of the fall is recorded, to the Revelations of St. John, in which the new Jerusalem is described)—that the gospel was intended to make up the deficiencies of the fall—to restore mankind by purifying his affections, to that state of holiness, which he had lost—and to qualify him to have his *con-versation in heaven*. To this end good works are every where insisted on in scripture. *Without holiness we are assured, no man shall see God*: and that *the end of the commandment is charity*.—But now in order to obtain this holiness different means are pursued.

One man asserts, that as faith is the source of all christian virtues, no other doctrine should be insisted on, which is carrying the conclusion too far.

far. Many, who have no notion of faith, may at first be wrought on by the moral rectitude of actions. From thence they may be led to acknowledge the christian religion as the best system of morals—and from thence, by God's assisting their pious endeavours, to acknowledge their faith in its founder and doctrines. Had *unqualified faith* been the *first doctrine* preached to such people, it would probably have had little effect.

Others again, who have *fine affections*, and feelings, resolve all duty both to God and man in to love. But many people of blunt affections can never raise in themselves those divine heights of love to God, or man; yet still, if they practise religious duties from a sense of pleasing God; and avoid sin from a fear of offending him, we cannot doubt of their obtaining the *end of the commandment.*

In short so much stress should never be laid on faith, or any other motive of action, as to exclude others. Each of them may lead by degrees to the *end of the commandment.*

Whoever is acquainted with the blunt, and low conceptions of the vulgar, must tremble for the salvation of men, if they cannot be saved without exalted ideas of faith, and love. St. Paul speaks of

of making himself all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. That is, I presume, he placed different motives before them, as he saw occasion. The scriptures certainly hold out different motives of action. They make *charity indeed the end of the commandment*; but they seem not to expect, that every man should attain it on the same motive. They talk of faith, and hope, and fear, and love, and other motives, each of which may, by degrees, be the happy mean of drawing men to the end of the commandment.

In the mean time, with regard to his own private case, let every man practise on that motive, which from his own feelings he discovers to be most effectual. Only let us not judge one another, and say, that the end of the commandment can be obtained by no means, but those, which we ourselves feel the most effectual.

I cannot here be misunderstood to suppose, that any *christian virtue* can be exercised *without christian faith*. What I contend for, is, that men are drawn to embrace the christian faith by various means.—There are different degrees also of faith; and the vulgar, unlettered christian, who works for his daily bread, may have that *general belief* in his bible,

bible, which may lead him to the *end of the commandment*; and secure to him the favour of God; tho he may not have that exalted faith, which some religionists require from all without distinction.*

* This sentiment was suggested to me by the following circumstance. I had been conversing with a very worthy person, who was rigorous in maintaining those opinions, which are commonly called methodistical; and particularly a rigid zeal for faith in opposition to worth. In the midst of our conversation I occasionally mentioned an old man in the parish, who with great industry (for he was only a day-labourer) had brought up a large family; and had afterwards saved enough to keep him from the parish. His wife was dead: his family was grown up; and he lived alone in a little cottage, on the edge of the forest. He was near eighty years of age; but still continued his labour, as far as he was able; and spent the remainder of his day in reading his bible, and in prayers. Often, when I have opened his cottage-door suddenly, I have found him in some religious exercise. He was constant also at church, and generally at the sacrament. He was very ready to give out of his little to his poor relations. I have known him give oftener than once five guineas at a time. He bore great infirmities with great resignation; and would talk of death with as much ease, and indifference as of going to bed. To me this old man appeared to fill his station with great religious propriety. But upon my mentioning him to my friend in a favourable manner, tho he was as well acquainted with all these circumstances, as I was, he directly replied, *That he did not think he was in the way of salvation.* On my enquiring with surprize into the reason of what appeared to me so uncharitable an opinion, I found that in some late conversation the old man had been speaking of his own sobriety; and saying, if he had spent his money at the alehouse, as many did, he should have been now in the poor-house. My friend called this *self-righteousness.*

And

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.

—Matthew 25. xlv.

THE eternity of future punishments hath occasioned much controversy among divines. Instead of taking part with either side, I am rather inclined to shew the impropriety of bringing the question at all into discussion.

In the first place, as enquiries of this kind must end, as they began, in *uncertainty*, it is *useless* to discuss them. We can know nothing on the subject but from scripture; and we see scripture is not so decisive, as to prevent disputes.

Secondly, enquiries of this kind argue some degree of distrust in providence. God Almighty has declared himself in numberless passages of scripture, to be a righteous judge—a just rewarder; and a just punisher of all our actions. What need we enquire farther? Do we distrust his word?—When a man makes me a promise, if I believe him to be an honest man, I simply take
his

his word. But if I have any doubt, I begin to enquire how he means to perform what he promised. Let us not then shew such distrust to God. He has assured us that he is a righteous judge. Let us therefore depend upon his word, without enquiring into the means he proposes.

I would observe farther, that the discussion of such a question, appears also to have a *bad tendency*. Notwithstanding all the influence of eternal punishment, vice cannot be kept in awe. Would you then loosen a tie, which does not at all appear too strict? It injures certainly no man to have his fears impressed in this case: but has rather a good tendency. If it were once fairly established, that future punishments were not eternal, it might set the inclinations of many a licentious man at liberty; and open a wide door to sin. It may, no doubt, be the secret wish of many to find such a theory right: but, I suppose, in general, the converts to it would be such as wished rather to ease their fears, than to cure their infidelity. As these therefore will be the chief persons, who will attend to your arguments, I should think it would be of more service to religion, to leave them to their own conjectures. They become nice casuists for no reason but to become safe sinners.

To these considerations against examining this inscrutable point, let me add, that it has the appearance of presumption also, and a cast of irreligion. Far be it from me to mark with those characters many good people, who have taken up this argument. Things appear to different persons in different lights. I only mention the idea, under which it *strikes me*. God seems plainly, for his own wise reasons, to have left this great point uncertain at least—or if not uncertain, leaning rather towards the positive side. Whatever his reasons are, it is not our business to enquire. We ought to shut up all our enquiries with that reverence that is due to the inscrutable counsels of God.

To conclude : as the mind of man must think, it will naturally fall on this, as well as other topics ; and every mind will have its own sentiments. All therefore that I contend for, is, that when the subject is so uncertain, and a mistake so dangerous, we should rather think in private, than run the risk of misleading others in a point, which if proved, might be of dangerous consequence ; and can hardly in any light be of importance.

The only *real ground* of the enquiry is to *vindicate the justice of God* : but he, whose faith is so ungrounded,

ungrounded, as to stand in need of so precarious, and uncertain a vindication, I fear, is in the state of those persons, who if they *believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho one rose from the dead*. If the numberless intimations, which God hath given us of his wisdom and goodness in the revelation of his will, have no effect upon them, I should not hope for much good from their being convinced, that future punishments are *not eternal*.

Without shedding of blood there is no remission.—

Hebrews 9. xxi.

THE idea conveyed in this passage appears rather singular, till we examine its connection with the whole of the divine economy. An atonement for sin by the shedding of blood, took place immediately after the fall. I allude to the sacrifice of Abel, which was of the firstlings of his flock; and consequently was a bloody sacrifice. To this, we are told, God *had respect*;* while Cain's sacrifice, which was of the fruits of the field, was rejected.

Through the early periods of the sacred history, we find the bloody sacrifice still continued. And if we look into the customs of heathen nations, we shall find too, that, in whatever way it got among them, it every where prevailed. Poets, historians, and philosophers, all mention this mode of atonement. I. D d

* GENESIS 4. iv.

ment: * infomuch, that, among the Latins, *ferreus* *ferire* (to make a covenant) literally signifies to sanction it, by striking or killing an animal.

But in the Jewish church we find, as we might expect, this idea under the strongest characters. It pervades indeed its whole ritual. Before the Jewish establishment, Moses consecrated the first covenant with blood. Having read the law to the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, and sprinkled both the book and the people. He sprinkled also with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry: saying, This is the blood of the Testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

In aftertimes the sacrifices of the temple were abundant. Various kinds were in use: but the expiatory sacrifice was by far the most frequent. The number of lambs sacrificed at every passover, almost exceeds belief.

* We have sometimes this vicarious atonement expressly marked out.

pro fibra sumite fibras;

Hanc animam vobis pro meliore damus.

Ovid. Fasti. Lib. 6. 555

§ See **HEBREWS 10. xix.**

This grand and universal display of expiatory sacrifice, plainly originating from God, when thus brought into one point of view, seems to be among the strongest evidences of the truth of christianity ; and of its leading doctrine of the atonement : and he who does not acknowledge it as such, must, I should think, be under some violent prejudices, which prevent his examining it with candour, and attention. On the face of the thing it certainly appears, that all mankind have thus unwittingly been preparing the world for the great christian atonement. What other account can the deist give of this wonderful concurrence in a custom so apparently unnatural ?—If he can give no account of it, let him take the account given in various parts of scripture, that the grand archetype was Christ, who was made *a sacrifice for sin*—let him take the account given by the apostle to the Hebrews, that *Christ being come an high-priest, hath obtained eternal redemption for us, not by the blood of goats, and calves ; but by his own blood. For if the blood of bulls, and of goats satisfieth to the purifying of the flesh ; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.**

D d 2

Father

* See HEBREWS IX. from several verses of which chapter these words are taken.

XXVII.

*Father Abraham, have mercy on me!—Luke
16. xxiv.*

IT may be matter of surprize, says the papist, that protestants are so warm against the invocation of saints, when we have here an instance from our Saviour's own mouth, of a prayer to a beatified spirit.

The protestant, in his turn, asks, whether the poetical machinery of a parable, and that too constructed on a Jewish plan,* is a sufficient foundation for a doctrine of such importance.

Besides, what does father Abraham do? He has no power to relieve his petitioner. Where then is the argument? A wicked man makes a petition to a saint, which the saint expressly tells him he cannot grant.—You or I may make a petition to a saint. It is disregarded; but is still an argument equally strong.

Who

* See Dr. LIGHTFOOT's account of this parable, which he says, is taken from the Gemara.

XXVIII.

Who against hope believed in hope.—Romans 4.

xviii.

WE have here, in appearance, a kind of contradiction. The mind of Abraham, the father of the faithful, is represented, at the same time, as hoping, and yet abandoning that hope.—But this is a very natural picture of the human mind. Where hope has a great object in view, there will always be fear. If not fear, there will always however be that sort of timorous fluctuation, which distinguishes *hope* from *assurance*.

It is thus in worldly affairs. When a great good is expected; but not yet possessed, there will always be an apprehension of losing it.

It is thus too with every good man, who views the christian dispensation as he ought.—When he contemplates the scheme of man's redemption in all its vastness—the wonderful means employed, and the immensity of the views it opens—he recoils at his own insignificance; and thinks it *against*

hope

D d 3

hope to believe, that such a creature as he feels himself, can ever be the object of such divine beneficence.

On the other hand, when he considers the love of God to man in his creation, which could have no end, but man's happiness—when he considers, that the very act of his creation is an assurance of God's future protection—when he reflects on the numerous promises of the gospel, of the truth of which he is clearly convinced by abundant evidence—his diffidence vanishes, and he cannot help, in the language of the text, *against hope believing in hope.*

It hath led others into a contrary sentence. It sometimes meet with very extraordinary passages on this subject—passions exalted to such a degree as to cause prayers to God, which might be transformed into supplices to a malignant

God. And yet, as a great many persons are in this state, I am not less sensible of the necessity of a more liberal interpretation of the text. I am not less sensible of the necessity of a more liberal interpretation of the text. I am not less sensible of the necessity of a more liberal interpretation of the text.

Thou

XXIX.

*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,
and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—*

Matthew 22. xxvii. xxix.

THE strength of these expressions hath led some religious people to make themselves very unhappy at the thoughts of their own deficiencies. They cannot, they conceive, arrive at that height of divine love, which is here prescribed.

It hath led others into a contrary extreme. We sometimes meet with very exceptionable language on this subject—luscious expressions of love applied to Christ—and prayers to God, which might be transposed into addresses to a mistress.*

In

* It is many years since I read WATTS on the *love of God*. His treatise, hymns, &c. on that subject, do not suit me. He is too much of an *enamorado*. I do not love fullsome, lascivious divinity. And the Doctor himself allowed (in his preface to Mrs. ROWE'S Devout Exercises) that many of his compositions, in the younger part of his life, were of that kind, which his maturer judgment disapproved. The passions should be consecrated to God, and it is desirable our devotion, and love to him, should be fervent; but as there

In the same way love to our neighbour hath often gone astray, and formed a criminal connection with carnal love. The ancient christians fell under an early stigma of this kind from their love-feasts, and kifs of charity; which growing into offence, were therefore laid aside. Modern enthusiasts also have often been taxed with carrying their love into the same vicious extreme. These considerations afford sufficient ground for enquiring into the nature of the love both of God, and man.

What there is so much of the *animal* in them, too much stress must not be laid upon them.

ORTON'S LETTERS to a young Clergyman, p. 109.

To keep God's commandments, says the pious Dr. Doddridge, rather than any of those passionate transports of the mind, on which some are ready to lay so great a stress, is the perfection of love to God.

See his improvement on the 2d chap. of 1 JOHN.

The addresses of the papists to the Virgin Mary abound with fulsome and passionate expressions of love. She is always represented as a most beautiful woman; and the idea is commonly blended in their devotions. Jesus is represented as a child, and God the father as an old man, both of whom in popish missals are comparatively little esteemed. The same fulsome expressions I have sometimes observed in the devotions of our enthusiasts to Christ.

What is *commonly* called *love*, may be defined, a passion acting *involuntarily* in favour of a pleasing object—often against reason—never in consultation with it. The *gratification* indeed of this passion may afterwards be subject to the discussion of reason: but our present enquiry goes only to the passion itself.

The term has sometimes a larger acceptation. A son loves his parent—a servant loves his master—a soldier his officer—and a person who has received benefits, his benefactor. But if we analyze this species of love, we shall find it very different from the other. The first respects chiefly the pleasing form: when it respects the moral qualities, it so far becomes *esteem*.—But in the other species of love all is moral. It consists chiefly in an admiration of some striking quality---in a sense of gratitude---in a firm trust, reliance, and dependence---that is, we shall find in it rather what may be called the *rational* part of love, than the mere *passion*.

Now this seems to be the general idea of the love of God. It is founded on a high admiration of his perfections, which produces adoration, and praise—on a firm belief in his goodness and promises, which produces trust and dependence—and in

in a strong sense of gratitude, which produces obedience, and an earnest desire to please.* In what more the love of God consists, I know not: so that I scruple not to rest it on reason, rather than on passion. Indeed this seems to be the idea, which the Scripture every where gives of divine love. *God is a spirit*, we are told, and we are ordered to *worship him in spirit and in truth*. This is certainly making worship a rational act. Passion has nothing to do with *spirit*; passion is of *corporeal* origin.—The text itself indeed seems to favour the explication I have given. The *heart*, the *soul*, and the *mind*, all seem to belong chiefly to the province of reason.

The love of our neighbour also rests on a foundation, equally rational. You are *to love your neighbour as yourself*. How is that? In *self-love* there is nothing of what is properly called the *passion of love*.

Besides, self-love often prompts us to act very viciously. But we are to follow only its rational lead. That is, it must be put under the direction of reason. Under this direction therefore our love to our neighbour will prompt us to avoid

*——Love first of all

Him, whom to love, is to obey.—MILTON.

every thing, that will injure him; and do every thing, that can tend to his advantage; for this is certainly the idea of rational self-love.

With regard to our neighbour, we have another rule also, which falls under the same regulation: *we should do to others as we would have others do to us.* This rule is indeed a direct appeal to reason.

It is not supposed, that we are to do to others, according to the tenor of every wanton wish, which we may suppose they may indulge. We should weigh the matter in reason—we should place ourselves in the situation of others; and them in ours; and should do for them, whatever we think we should reasonably expect from them. Thus when St. Paul gives a detail of the duties of charity, he seems to resolve them all into efforts of reason, formed into habits of benevolence.*

Thus then, I think, it appears, that no one need fright himself, if he do not feel that ardour of passion, either to God, or his neighbour, which he may think the text inculcates. At the same time we ought to guard against the natural coolness of reason; and should be very cautious, how we draw an apology from its dictates for the transgression of duties, *on which hang all the law and the prophets.*

Secret

* See 1 CORINTHIANS 13.

XXX.

Secret things belong unto the Lord : but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever—that we may do all the words of the law.—Deuteronomy 29. xxix.



THIS text is taken from the law of Moses. But the law of Moses is one of God's revelations: and God's revelations will always have the same tendency. We may consider the text therefore as perfectly christian.

It contains these truths---that there are points of religion, (such is its mysterious doctrines) which the understanding of man cannot fathom---that these points cannot properly be said to be revealed, *as they belong to God*---that there are other things, which *are revealed*, and are intended merely for our use---that these things are plain, and obvious to our capacities---that *they belong to us and our children*---and that the reason given for this distinction, is, that *we may do all the*

words

words of this law.—That is, in short, that the grand intention of all revelation, is practical religion.

N. B. All these several points may with great advantage be dwelt upon and explained.

In which, are some things hard to be understood.—

2 Peter 3. xvi. *are some things hard to be understood.*

THIS expression is commonly thought to refer to St. Paul's epistles; which are here supposed to contain things *hard to be understood*. The alteration of a single letter in the original (οἰς for αἰς) which some manuscripts warrant, make the sense wholly different. Instead of St. Paul's epistles, the mysteries of the gospel, are *hard to be understood*. This makes a much better sense; for tho many reasons may be given, why some things in St. Paul's epistles may *at this day be hard to be understood*; yet we cannot well conceive them to have been so at the time they were written: we cannot well suppose that epistles written to particular churches, could contain any thing that was not easily understood by those churches.—To let this matter however pass, in the following discourse, I shall consider *first* the source

source of scriptural difficulties:—and *secondly*, how far a difficulty is an objection.

With regard to the sources of scriptural difficulties, they may be traced either to *human* or *divine* origin. Scriptural difficulties of human origin arise from errors in transcribing---from errors in translating---from the idioms of the Jewish language so different from our own---from figurative, proverbial, and allegoric forms of speaking---and lastly from ancient rites, manners, and customs, which are now little known. To one or the other of these sources, I suppose most of the scriptural difficulties under this head may be referred.

Such difficulties, as arise from a *divine source*, are of a different kind. Of them no solution can be given. They consist of those mysterious points, which we can never understand. Such are the mysterious doctrines of the Trinity---of the incarnation of our blessed Lord---of his propitiation for sin---of the nature of redemption---of the mode of inspiration, and of some other points, which are wholly beyond our capacity to explain.---Let us however see, how far these, or the other species of scriptural difficulty, arising from human inadvertence, amount to matter of objection. Sceptics have turned both the one sort of difficulties,

tics, and the other into objection. Let us examine with what reason.

Let us consider, *first* the scriptural difficulties of *human origin*. These have in general been well explained by the labours of learned men. To the simple-minded, and well-disposed they never were objections. But I should just ask those, who are in quest of difficulties in order to turn them into objections, Whether they have fully, and candidly examined all that has been said in answer to these difficulties? If they have, and remain still unconvinced with regard to a few particular difficulties; they must at least have found, in their enquiries, such a number of difficulties dissolved, that if they have any candour, they must suppose, those which remain, are not indissoluble. — If the sceptic, on the other hand, which is most probably the case, has taken no pains to examine the difficulties, in which he seems to be so interested, he cannot certainly be considered as a judge of the case. He has heard one side only; and we may dismiss him without farther attention. It is plain to what side he leans. He is a prejudiced man. He has other objections to the gospel, besides these difficulties; and if these were dissolved, a new set of difficulties would

would arise. In all probability such a man must look to his life and manners. There lies the rub. The gospel is too pure ; not too difficult.

But perhaps he is candid enough to see the force of all this, and owns that difficulties, which are merely of *human origin*, cannot always be avoided in a state of human things ; and therefore cannot properly be considered as objections : but still perhaps he is disconcerted with the other species of difficulties—the mysteries of religion, which he cannot accommodate to his reason.

A person of this disposition, who is seriously willing to enter into argument, may be asked, Whether he does not think it reasonable, that when God Almighty makes a revelation of his will to man, there may be some things in it, which human reason cannot comprehend ? Does he for instance, pretend to understand the whole plan of the redemption of mankind ? Does he clearly see God's intention and design in every part of it ? He can have no real *objection*, unless he clearly understand the whole subject-matter, to which he objects. If I take up a book on algebra, and do not understand the principles of the science, the *difficulties* that arise, are not certainly *objections*.

I must solve them in my own *ignorance*. But if

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I take up a poem, or a history, the subject of which I clearly comprehend, a *difficulty* there becomes an objection.

But you reply, that as the scriptures are given for a directory, they should therefore be plain in every part.

Why so?—It is true, that as far as the scriptures are a directory, they should be plain.--- And so they are. But there are many things in the scriptures, which are not meant as directions---where doctrines are hinted at, and were never intended to be explained; nor indeed could be: doctrines in which you have no concern. These are difficulties, no doubt; but to make them objections would be absurd.

We reason thus in common life. In God's moral government of the world, what is meant as our directory, is plain, and easy; but many things in it are mysterious, abstruse, and above our comprehension. But tho these things are *difficulties*, we have the sense not to make them *objections*. How ridiculous would that man appear, who should object to his victuals, because he was unacquainted with the nature of vegetation, or of animal growth?

Let

Let us then take care, that we may not be among those *unlearned, and unstable people, who wrest difficulties, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.*

XXXII.

Follow not a multitude to do evil.—Exodus

23. ii.



SOME animals are of a solitary nature---musing
---pensive---united only with their mates.
Others are gregarious; and their only joy is to
live in society.

Of this latter kind is man. He is naturally inclined to associate with his fellows. Here and there, for the sake of some convenience, or on some religious motive, he builds his habitation apart from the haunts of others. In general however men herd together in towns, and villages.

Now man being naturally a wicked animal, (if the scripture be acquainted with his nature) these societies are greatly inclined to mischief and disorder. As in jails, the wickedness of one infects another; and the wise legislator wishes to keep each convict apart in a different cell---so, in the extended scale of life, cities may be considered as large places

places of confinement, where the wicked have a general rendezvous. Here vice increases by contagion; which might have been checked by confining each person to his separate cell.

The state however of human affairs will not admit of separate cells. For the purposes of civil society, these hords are necessary. They are necessary in bringing to perfection the arts of life---the civilization of manners---and the progress of learning. We may add also, that a long catalogue of virtues are cultivated in society; which could not be cultivated in a sequestered life. So that altho the human species might be kept more innocent by being kept apart, they would become more savage, and in many respects less virtuous.--- We must take the world therefore as it is, with all its good, and all its bad qualities; and make the best of it. We shall find much to admire, and more to avoid. Our danger arises chiefly from its *amusements*---its *free opinions*---and its *vicious example*.

N. B. All these heads might be considered more at large, in a sermon.

XXXIII.

Neither is God in all his thoughts.—Psal. 10. iv.

THIS seems to be spoken of the *same fool*, who, as David tells us in another place, *said in his heart, there is no God*. He was not such a fool, as to declare it abroad; but he was fool enough to *say it in his heart*—that is to *persuade* himself to believe, what his bad life, no doubt, made him *wish*.

I shall not here attempt to reason this point with him. I only mean to borrow the subject of a discourse from that part of his character which is held out in the text, *Neither is God in all his thoughts*.

The duty of prayer, I think, may be divided into three kinds.—The first is *public worship*—a species of homage, which the serious part of all

all mankind—heathen, jews, and christians, have thought themselves bound to perform.—The second is private prayer; when we *enter into our closet, and shut the door and pray in secret to our Father*.—The third is what is alluded to in the text—*having God in all our thoughts*.—This last is the kind of prayer, which I mean at present to explain. I shall examine, first, the *nature*; and secondly the *advantages* of it.

By having God in all our thoughts, I mean encouraging in ourselves that heavenly disposition, which mixes Deity, as it were, with the most common concerns of life. If any little successful event arises (I speak of the smallest events of life) the first sentiment is an ejaculation of praise to God; accompanied perhaps with a pious hope, that its issue may be morally improving. The same pious hope, accompanied with an ejaculation signifying perfect resignation, attends every little sinister event.—When any thing is done, it is the first question of the heart, Is this pleasing to God? —When any thing is left undone, How far, O God, am I guilty in thy sight? *Cleanse me from my secret faults*.—Does any little difficulty arise?—Guard me O God, with thy good spirit!—
Have

Have I used a wrong expression?---Set a guard,
O God, upon my lips!

When we thus mix God and religion, with all the little offices of life, it appears, that, in the best sense, we have *our conversation in heaven*; and fulfil the precept of doing every thing, *whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, to the glory of God*. This constant attention to our heavenly father, David expresses thus: *As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters; and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God*.---Let the sceptic scoff: but let us persuade ourselves, that by thus mixing God, and religion with the common affairs of life, we obey that God, who has graciously informed us, he has an eye upon our minutest concerns---and that not even a *sparrow falls to the ground*, without his concurrence.

Let us next turn to the special advantages of this mode of worship.

The first is, that it tends more perhaps, than any other species of devotion, to form the heart. All men are, more or less, inclined to the *opus operatum*. It is by no means solely confined to popery. Tho we should be impressed on all occasions

casions, when we pray to God, with the highest reverence, yet we are too apt, both when we pray at church, and in our closets, to make our prayers matter of form. Do the best we can, they are often cold, and languid. The occurrences of life are too apt to obtrude themselves upon us. But when *we have God in all our thoughts*, the occurrences of life make up our very prayers. They furnish materials for them.

The dissenter therefore uses no form : the minister keeps up the attention of the congregation by an extempore prayer : which would certainly have the preference, if every minister was properly qualified for this service ; and if a congregation could readily follow an extempore prayer. But in fact, I think the chief difference with regard to *form*, between them and us, is, that *their forms* are gotten by heart ; and ours are written.*

I am

* On particular occasions, I think, the dissenter has the advantage. An occasion of this kind I recollect. It was in the beginning of the year 1786, when the first fleet sailed to Botany Bay. The ships stood through the Needles, which are opposite to Lynnington. It was on a Sunday-morning, when the people were assembling at church ; and the dissenting minister took a very just occasion, as the fleet sailed past, to desire the prayers of the congregation for the success of the expedition.

I am not fond of comparing one duty with another ; as it often throws a depreciating exception, where it is not intended. And yet it is not easy in some cases, without a comparison, to get at the truth. Public devotion, closet devotion, and the devotion here examined, are all certainly highly good ; and all prescribed by our religion ; but the mind is certainly in a fitter frame for devotion, when it breaks out in its own spontaneous effusions ; than when it is excited by the sound of a bell.

Another advantage, which attends this mode of prayer, is the great easiness of it. We carry the temple along with us. We need no temple, but the heart. We have not even the trouble of *entering into our closet, and shutting the door*. We may every where---in all companies---amidst any business---*pray in secret* to our father.

The tree is known by its fruit.—Matthew 12.

xxxiii.

THIS text is frequently in the mouth of the Solfidian. "As the tree, says he, is known by its fruit, so is a man's faith by his works. If his faith be found, his works will of course be good."—And thus far the doctrine is certainly just, and scriptural. But the Solfidian goes a step farther. He lays the stress upon faith, as a justifying principle; and considers works in no other light, than as a test of that principle. In this I cannot think him quite scriptural. That good works are a test of the purity of a man's faith, is very true: but that they ought to be considered in a somewhat higher light, is I think, true also; and this very text may be brought to prove it. The tree, according to his own interpretation, stands for faith---the fruit for works. Now of these two, the *tree*, and its *fruit*, which is most excellent? Which is the *cause*, and which the *effect*?—

effect ?——Which is the *mean*, and which the *end* ? Considered in these lights, the fruit is certainly of most consequence. We suppose works therefore to be the *effect*, of which faith is the *cause*. We suppose works to, be the *end*, for which faith is only the *mean*.

If

If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But who so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein; he being not a forgetful hearer; but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed.—James 1.

xxiii. xxiv. xxv.

THE apostle St. James compares looking into the *perfect law of liberty*, or reading the scriptures, to a man's looking at himself in a glass. Let us examine the apostles beautiful allusion, and see what kind of men are pointed out.

In the first place, men often look into a glass through *pride*. They admire their own persons: they have over-weening opinions of themselves: they think themselves handsomer than any other persons.

They

They who look into a glass with those views, represent those men, who read the scriptures with high notions of their own worth. Instead of abasing themselves, or humbling themselves for their deficiencies, their attention is laid out only on such passages, as tend to raise them in their own conceit. Such a reader of scripture was the Pharisee of old. He saw in it enough *to thank God, that he was not like other men.*—By looking into the scripture he found that he had no transgressions as he thought, of any consequence to answer for—that he was strict in the performance of the most punctilious matters—and that, in fact, on comparing himself with others, he found a mighty difference in his own favour.

Others again look into a glass through *vanity*. They wish to trick out their persons by ornaments—to set themselves off to the best advantage—to gain the admiration of all, who see them.

There are often men of learning, who read the scripture to shew their skill in criticism; and raise their reputation by curious enquiries. They look into the *perfect law of liberty*, to shew what acute lawyers they are in expounding its deeper doctrines; or in drawing from it some refined system, which is probably of no value either to themselves

selves, or others. They are engaged in some controversy—they are eager to lead the way in some debate—and seek for applause by their nice interpretations, and happy accomodation of different texts. In the mean time it is probable, that neither religion, nor scripture are in the least assisted by their learned labours. Like some navigator of old, they raise a spectre, that they may have the credit of laying it; tho it would otherwise have vanished of itself, without doing mischief to any one.

But besides those, who look into a glass, through *vanity* and *pride*, there is another set of men, who are chiefly characterised by the apostle's comparison—such as look into a glass so *carelessly* as to answer no end at all. *They straightway forget what manner of men they are.* Now these are by far the most numerous set of christians. They never consider the *perfect law of liberty* as a law intended for their use. The pleasures of the world so entirely engage them, that they think not of any higher concern. They feel nothing of their soul about them : all relates to their body.

Besides these ill-disposed, and careless examiners, there are others, whom the apostle's comparison supposes to look into a glass merely to adjust

just any impropriety, which they may discover in themselves. These are they who read the scriptures with two great views.

The first is, to rectify in themselves what they may observe *amiss*. If they look attentively into the scriptures, and compare their own thoughts, words, and actions, with what they find there; they will of course find many things daily getting wrong. We see our own faults with a tender eye. A faithful friend, who will point them out to us is a kind monitor. Friendship however is delicate. But he who looks into the *perfect law of liberty*, may be sure, if his heart go with his eyes, to see his faults laid truly before him.

The second great point he has in view, after the amendment of his faults, is to adorn himself with virtues. Many, as was observed, look into a glass to adorn themselves fantastically; he puts on merely such ornaments, as are plain, simple, and becoming, and render him in fact more agreeable to others. He adorns himself with the virtues of a christian.

This is the man, whom the apostle's comparison points out to us for imitation—this is the man, who, in the language of the text, *shall be blessed in his deed*.

XXXVI.

And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses, and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho one arose from the dead.—Luke 16. 30.

THIS passage puts the following objection into the mouth of the freethinker.

“If a person’s rising from the dead, says he, is not a mode of evidence suited to *persuade*, why should Jesus offer his *own resurrection from the dead*, as the last, and best proof of his divine commission? On his own authority we see it is of little weight; and yet his disciples are continually urging it as the strongest evidence, that could be produced.”

If the objector will be at the pains of considering the fact, he will find, that his statement of it is not quite exact; and that there is no disagreement between what our Saviour says, and what his apostles urged.

The parable represents an infidel calling for a *resurrection from the dead*, as the strongest evidence to convince another infidel. Abraham does not in the least insinuate, that a resurrection from the dead was *not the strongest evidence*: indeed his argument plainly leads us to believe, he thought it *was* the strongest evidence. What he says therefore amounts only to this—that if the infidel, who was a Jew, would not give a *fair hearing* to Moses, and the prophets, no evidence, however strong, could have weight with him. When the heart is hardened and confirmed in infidelity, it will shuffle off, and avoid the force of any evidence, that can be given. The strongest would be thrown away.

Now this was in fact the very case of the unbelieving Jews at that time, to whom the parable was addressed. They rejected our Saviour as the Messiah, and ascribed his miracles to the devil; tho they saw them plainly wrought to counteract all wickedness. Nay many of them, who had been present at the resurrection of Lazarus, had even the *evidence here required* of a man raised from the dead; and yet they still continued impatient. And afterwards the more awful circumstances of the resurrection of Jesus himself, had no better

better effect upon them. So that it is plain a resurrection from the dead, however convincing a proof in itself, is not sufficient to convince those, whose hearts are hardened by infidelity.—It seems also as if it had been one design of our Saviour in this parable to point out the future hardened infidelity of the Jews with regard to the very event of his own resurrection.

“But still, replies the objector, it appears from the parable, that Jesus thought the evidence of Moses, and the prophets *sufficient*, without adding the *farther evidence* of a man raised from the dead. And tho we may allow the evidence of a man raised from the dead to be the strongest evidence that can be given, yet still if it was more than was necessary, it seems more than Providence ordinarily allows. So that at any rate, there seems to have been no occasion for the resurrection of Jesus.”

To this we reply, that if we consider the different pretensions of judaism, and christianity, there was occasion for it. The faith of the Jews was confined to Moses, and the prophets; for which they had sufficient evidence of various kinds. They did not therefore require the *additional*

evidence of a man raised from the dead.— But the gospel carries our faith into higher regions. It not only brings *immortality to light*; it farther teaches, that our very bodies shall not lie in the grave; but shall hereafter take a spiritualized form, and be united to our souls. As these articles of faith therefore were *new*, some *new evidence* seemed requisite to enforce them. And what could be so proper as for the *author and finisher of this faith* to prove it by his own resurrection from the dead?—In fact, it was a kind of evidence, which had more weight than any other, with honest, unprejudiced minds, tho the hardened heart was able to resist it.

From these premises then it follows, first, that our Saviour by no means designed to speak lightly, in the parable before us, of the evidence of a man raised from the dead:—secondly, that such evidence was well suited to the christian, tho unnecessary to the jew—and lastly, that it was a mode of evidence well calculated to give the firmest support to the christian faith.

Awake

XXXXVII.

*Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead,
and Christ shall give thee light.*—Ephesians
5. xiv.

THE apostle St. Paul, having been warning his Ephesian converts against falling again into the impurities of their heathen neighbours, breaks out into this noble apostrophe, which is the application indeed of a passage of Isaiah to the times of Christ.*

The words may be applied to those, who *sleep in life*; and to those, who *sleep in the grave*.

To the sleepers of this world Religion calls: Awake thou, who art immersed in the pleasures, and business of life. Thou art asleep. Thou art in a dream. Awake. Recollect where all this tends. Wouldest thou spend thy whole life in a dream? Arise. Set about the great work before thee. Rise from the dead—from the death of this world—The world is thy distemper—seek relief—fly to Christ; and he will *give thee light*.

Again

* ISAIAH 60. i.

Again, when this world is over, the same awful voice will found through the regions of the grave: *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead.* Christ shall judge thee; and if thou art among those, who were roused from the dream of a mortal life, Christ will indeed give thee light, and thou shalt be removed into mansions of eternal glory.



END OF THE HINTS FOR SERMONS.

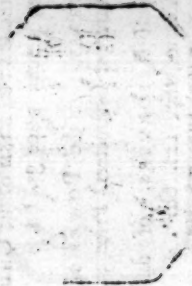


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